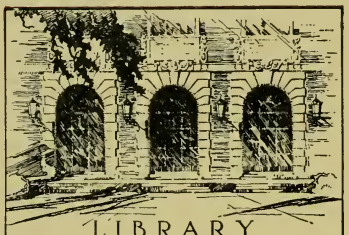
Michael Sadlier



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WHICH IS THE WINNER?

WHICH IS THE WINNER?

OR,

The First Gentleman of his Family.

By CHARLES CLARKE,

AUTHOR OF "CHARLIE THORNHILL."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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WHICH IS THE WINNER?

CHAPTER I.

SPRING VALE.

'Prisca gens mortalium.'—Hor., *Epodes* ii. 2.

To the lover of the picturesque, the Midland counties of England are presumed to present but few attractions. The presumption is unjust. Warwickshire is full of beauties: its magnificent glades and gently undulating woodlands, which intersect the county, give to the eye a park-like appearance, scarcely surpassed in any part of this island; the varieties of its substrata present a series of fruit-bearing pictures to the agricultural speculator; and the great extent of rich pasture-land assimilates to its neighbouring counties of Northampton and Leicester. In

the case of these two we have to deal with hardy sceptics, who can imagine no associations with such names but leather breeches and scarlet coats. It is a commonly-received opinion among the uninitiated, that every field is a dead level, whose ingress and egress is by a double post and rails, lately improved by wire fencing; that there are trees in the county, but few and far between; and that the lovely tints of our woodland scenery are replaced by patches of gorse, at stated intervals of four miles, for the convenience of the Nimrods who people the district. They and the foxes are supposed to wage continual war, and to have devastated the land of all save the fat beasts which graze on the hundred-acre pastures. Broken collar-bones and beef, to supply tea to the wounded, are the staple commodities of the happy hunting grounds.

We never yet heard of a tourist who made Melton or Leicester his head-quarters, or of an artist who settled at Market-Harborough to cultivate his taste, or to idealize the picturesque.

The extent of such local ambition is a favourite hound, or hunters at grass; the latter an imaginative concession to the beautiful, which is never realized in either of the counties above mentioned. A bobtailed nag, up to his hocks in clover, may give some notion of Mr. Jorrocks's crack country in the months of May, June, or July; but the only run that a Northamptonshire hunter, even in a poor man's stable, is likely to get, during the summer, is a run in a light buggy, when magisterial business, or a market-day, may chance to take him to his post town.

But whatever the notion of the Midland counties formed by those whose knowledge has been limited to the graphic reports of embryo sportsmen, to encyclopædiac readings, or to a flying transit through the fens, we can assure our readers that there are spots which vie with the most beautiful scenery of southern or western England; and as the eye roams over miles of country, always bright, winter and summer, with its emerald green, it seems to encounter a

succession of woodlands which ought to belong to Sussex or Kent. This arises from the peculiar magnificence of the hedgerow timber: the long lines of which, from the sloping sides of a country rather undulating than flat, give an appearance of extreme richness and fertility. Here and there, at the proper season, the yellow grain, at intervals, relieves, or agreeably excites, the eye after the repose it derives from the constant recurrence of green fields.

It is in the most beautiful part of one of these counties that the scene of our story is laid. It was a calm, clear, but rather chilly afternoon, towards the end of October, that two figures (without pretending to rival the inimitable G. R. P. James) emerged from the market-place of the little town of Saxonby. Saxonby itself has but little to recommend it. A High Street, which seems to belong to every town, and two limbs of an isosceles triangle, branching from it at either end, contained the nucleus of about four thousand inhabitants. It had had a trade, but short-sighted policy deprecated the

approach of the railway, and it woke too late to mourn its folly in a renunciation of its rubbers, suppers, assemblies, and society in general. For the rest, it has a Town Hall of moderate dimensions, where, every Wednesday, choleric gentlemen convicted poachers, assigned a vagrant population to a distinct locality, and fatherless babies to responsible papas, under the able direction of Mr. Hugh Darville, clerk to the justices, and Conservative political agent, of whom they will hear more who are willing to wade through the following pages. On other days of the week, Sunday more particularly, Saxonby was as stupid a place as can well be conceived; and the only time when any excitement prevailed was when the county hounds passed through on their road to or from cover, or the roystering patrons of that great national sport wanted gruel and brandy-and-water for their horses and themselves.

Out of the market-place of this little country town of Saxonby there rode two persons, one Wednesday afternoon, towards the end of Octo-

ber, 185—. One was (*place aux dames!*) a young lady, of eighteen or twenty years of age, of great beauty of form. Her habit of dark blue was admirably fitted for the exhibition of every feminine grace, without any constraint. From her waist she moved with each caracole of her dark chestnut horse, who seemed proud of his burden; and whose action, as it should be, was on the extremest limit of freedom, and yet within a moment's control of his graceful rider. Every market-cart that passed him on the descent stirred the warm current of his blood; but the silken thread with which he was held seemed as potent as though he were spell-bound. The girl wore a man's hat, of a suitable shape, which gave a firmness and dignity to her pliant figure. Had she been in the middle of Rotten Row, instead of on the Market Hill of her own post town, she could not have been 'mieux gantée' than she was. Her throat was piquantly collared, without being gentlemanly (a great difficulty, it would appear, if we may judge by our own experience), and her whole

appearance had that finish which is essential at all times to the true gentlewoman, but more especially on horseback. She wore a half veil —that mysterious softener of asperities, or guardian of beauties, which forbids me to indulge at present in any lengthened description of her features. We can only say that the farmers stood aghast, as they met her in their market-day state, sobered by her presence; and the smock-frocked yokels grinned from ear to ear as they touched their long-napped broad-brims in involuntary homage to an irresistible 'nescio quid,' which they could not explain.

Her companion was older than herself by four or five years. He was very tall, very slight, not a remarkably fine figure, though rather a gentlemanly one on horseback. His dress was that of a country squire, consisting of Bedford-cord breeches and black polished boots, known by the name of butcher boots. His legs were eminently correct, being guiltless of what is called a calf; a characteristic which we may regard as a misfortune to any gentleman desir-

ous of shining (about the legs) in the field. His upper person was clothed in an ordinary cutaway coat, buttoned over the chest. He carried a light hunting-whip, and rode a powerful but remarkably well-bred horse, as if the saddle were his natural element. His features were thin, his complexion clear, his hair and eyes in colour inclined to the Norman strain of blood; and without being what is called handsome, he was a good type of the English gentleman of the best school—the landed aristocracy. Such were Stafford and Evelyn Carrington, of Spring Vale Manor. They were followed by a well-mounted groom at a respectful distance.

'Well, Stafford, what was there doing at the Town Hall to-day? Who was there?'

'There's to be a contest, after all, for the county; and Sir Michael is not very well pleased at the opposition. Who do you think is the rival candidate?'

'Lord Skeffington, or that odious Mr. Briggs, the Chartist,' said the girl with a laugh, evidently not regarding the opposition of the latter as of

much importance. They had cleared the town, and were ascending the hill which led into the country on the road to Spring Vale. Her brother threw the reins on his horse's neck, and pulled out a cigar, which he proceeded to light.

'Some one even more odious than Mr. Briggs. What do you think of young Bradfield? Piece of impertinence!'

Evelyn Carrington opened her eyes, but did not immediately reply. Young Carrington proceeded. 'Darville tells my father that the address will be out to-morrow. Why in the world doesn't he go to some of his manufacturing constituencies; it can only be done to put us to an additional expense. Besides, who the devil is Bradfield, that he should disturb the peace of a county?'

'His father's enormously rich; and after all it's better to have a man of education and a gentleman, than—'

'That's just the reason why my father will be so annoyed. If it had been Skeffington, or one of the old county families, they would

have had some pretension. But a parvenu, a stocking-maker, a cotton-spinner, or whatever he calls himself!'

'Stafford, you're unjust. You know young Bradfield was one of the cleverest men in the university. I've heard you say how he distinguished himself; and—'

'Not very difficult to distinguish himself after six hours a-day hard reading; you seem rather interested in him.'

'What nonsense you talk, Stafford. I've never seen him above half-a-dozen times in my life; and you know you quarrelled with me for a week, because I danced one quadrille with him at Lady Sarah's; I was almost the only person he knew in the room.'

'Just what I said; a confounded snob, whom nobody knows, to come here and contest ——! Upon my soul, I've no patience with the absurdity. Thank Heaven he's no chance.'

'Thirty thousand a-year has a chance anywhere.'

'Ah! that's just what the women always think.'

The brother and sister were in a magnificent country. On the right were large undulating grass fields, with every fence well kept, and the land well stocked, and in the highest state of cultivation. About two miles from the road on that side, was Sommerton, a large village, which had grown into almost a small town, under the fostering care of the Bradfields. In the middle of it stood the hall, a building of great pretension, magnificently furnished, with a library of almost European reputation, and adorned with pictures and works of art of every description. The village, the hall, and the estate bore the evident marks of great wealth. On the left side of the road ran the remnant of the Carrington Estate; it presented to the eyes of the young people a painful contrast to the other.

'Are you not going over these fields?' said Evelyn, pulling up her horse and pointing to a gate which led into a tempting sward. 'We always have a canter here, as far as the canal; the hand-gates are always open.'

'Certainly not, they belong to the Bradfields. Come over here, Evelyn, if you want a gallop. I'm going to jump this horse over the fences on this side. He hasn't robbed us of that, at all events.'

'Impossible, I can't get over that big bullfinch at the bottom; besides, if anyone was to see me.'

'Who is there to see you—the Darvilles? I don't suppose you care about them, or that fool Bradfield, botanizing. However, I'm going just inside the fence parallel with the road; and as Johnson's behind, you can keep along the road.'

Evelyn looked as if she felt that her brother was unjust; but she said nothing, and cantered quietly along, while she watched Stafford schooling his new horse over the fences towards the canal gate, which was to bring him once more into the road to Spring Vale.

The foregoing conversation does not exhibit Stafford Carrington in an amiable light; but if ever an excuse could be made for an exhibition

of temper, surely his was the case in point. It is no slight matter to have to contest a county at all. The representation of it, with its attendance on committees when you should be hunting, the wakeful drowsiness of eloquent members at a time when the rest of the world is in bed, or playing a rubber, your dependence on others, and their expectations of your capability to befriend or assist them, a crown of thorns, which is continually twitting you with your greatness. When this honour is thrust upon one it is bad enough, when a sort of hereditary right, or a presumption of it (which is the same thing), forces you into the vacant seat, it is still a cushion stuffed with tenpenny nails, which defies ease or oblivion; but when you are likely to sweat bodily and mentally for the acquisition of it, and to be made to pay very heavily for *the habit* of being ill at ease, the first glimpse of such a state of things, must produce some little irritability of temper. I think a strong substantial opposition in Tiverton would try the good temper of the premier himself.

And this was exactly Sir Michael Carrington's case. The old gentleman, though impoverished, and with a curtailed estate, but unrestrained inclinations, had represented ——shire for thirty years. His father had done so before him; and it was fully intended that his son should succeed him. A Whig had not been known in the family —not in any branch of it—since the days of George II., when they went over to the Hanoverians, as supporters of the Monarchy, with as much matter-of-course indifference as they had hitherto supported the Stuarts. The Carringtons were, and always had been, Church, State, and King men, whatever form of Church, State, or King could only prove its claim by possession. Sir Michael always spoke of the county as his own, as naturally as he spoke of the remnant of the Carrington Estates. A Sir Michael Carrington had been standard-bearer to Richard I. in the Holy Land, and the family had lived in the shire ever since. The whole county concurred in believing the old Tory baronet to be the proper representative of its

sentiments, and he good-humouredly shared his seat with a younger man, who did the hard work, and held precisely the same opinions as himself. Of late such men had been less easy to meet with than formerly; for the beautifully neat leathers and tops, which was his ordinary dress, were not much more out of date than the very extreme conservatism which still marked the bucolic mind of ——shire. Everybody, therefore, must allow that an opposition at all was a most unheard-of and impertinent proceeding. Circumstances, I shall show, made it, from the quarter in which it arose, personally and doubly offensive.

When Stafford Carrington jumped back again into the road, he had regained much of his usual serenity. The negotiation of a very stiff piece of timber in cold blood had produced a satisfactory result on him, and placed his new purchase uppermost in his mind. The man who can resist the appeal, at his time of life, must be naturally blest with a bad temper, and Stafford's was far from that.

'I hope you saw him jump, dear,' said he, rejoining his sister, and reining up his horse, which ambled over the bridge in a state of excitement produced by his late exercise. 'How delighted my father will be: it's his last present,—be sure you make the most of it at dinner.'

'I saw the fences; and how did you expect me to ride over such a place as those rails in the bottom of the hollow? Now a small gap, I don't mind, when nobody's looking; and although Selim is a little hot, he never makes a mistake, do you, you beauty?' and the girl patted her horse, and followed her brother to the lodge gate, which opened upon Spring Vale Manor.

The village itself is one of the most beautiful in that part of England. The park attached to the manor, the seat of the Carrington family, is of great extent, beautifully wooded, and well watered by a large reservoir, whose banks were the resort of various kinds of water-fowl. It had a wild appearance, sedgy

and osier-like at the extremities, forming a strong contrast with the cultivated look of the rest of the domain. At its limit, a mile from the house, ran the canal, which we have before mentioned; and which had been crossed by the riders; it had been judiciously planted out by firs and spruce, and its banks, which were steep and broken, presented to the eye patches of heather and gorse, a sure find, when the spinneys in the park had been tried in vain. As the brother and sister ascended the sloping road which led through the park to the house, the former thought of the power and influence he might have inherited, had the thousand of acres of rich pasturage, which he beheld around him, and which once were his grandfather's, been now his. There was nothing avaricious about this man's nature; and he was too indolent to be ambitious: but dark tales were afloat of the manner in which thousands had been alienated from the great Carrington Estate, and he could not forgive the present possessor of those acres the fact of being a parvenu.

The house stood in a commanding situation, more so than is usual with houses built about the time of Elizabeth. It was long and low, commanding the length of a terrace walk, from which descended in a considerable slope, a lawn of great extent; studded here and there with rich trees of great rarity, and terminating in a smaller lake; which, as the equestrians approached, the autumnal sun was gilding with frosty rays. A wide carriage drive extended in front of the house, and passing along the terrace entered a magnificent avenue of limes, which led directly to the other lodge. This gate abutted on to the village near the top of the hill on which it stood. The church porch faced it, and the parsonage stood beyond and above it.

Returning to the bottom of the hill, with the old mouldering park wall on the right-hand side, and the labourers' cottages on the left, with their cheerful gardens, still full of autumn flowers, we come to the village green. It lay upon the public road which led from Saxonby,

and on which Stafford and Evelyn Carrington had been riding. The right-hand side of this green was occupied by a large farm-house, the residence of Farmer Leighton, the baronet's principal tenant; a stout handsome man, happy in his landlord and his daughters, and a good specimen of a ——shire yeoman. Crossing the road and facing the green was a large house, comparatively modern. The bricks appeared to blush for their temerity; there were, however, plenty of them to keep each other in countenance. Some handsome trees in the grounds, and a multiplicity of gable ends bespoke size and pretension. It overlooked large grass fields on every side; and substantial paling which joined the brick walls of the garden announced 'proprietorship,' as plainly as if it had been written by a professional wall chalker. This was the house and property of Hugh Darville, Esq., Attorney at Law.

The village therefore consisted, it will be seen, of the squire, as Sir Michael Carrington was usually called; Mr. Darville, the lawyer,

whose house of business was at Saxonby; the rector, the Rev. Walter Carrington, a nephew of Sir Michael, who lived as much at the hall as at the rectory; Farmer Leighton, and about three hundred labourers, tenants, small farmers, and little tradesmen, who belonged to the Carrington interest, body and soul, and who would not have thanked Mr. Ward Beecher, or any of his North American brethren, for any efforts at emancipation from their voluntary slavery. There was one more house we had nearly forgotten. Exactly opposite the upper lodge gate which opened upon the lime avenue was a road which led nowhere apparently. It terminated with a sharp pitch, and bending to the left disclosed a swing gate and a charmingly-sheltered cottage and lawn. It was below the southern slope of the churchyard. It was always in beautiful order and enjoyed a remarkable reputation as 'The Spring Vale Cottage.' It was occupied by a very old lady, the aunt of Sir Michael Carrington; the unmarried sister of his father.

Miss Philadelphia Carrington, or Aunt Philly, as she was called by her relatives, was a character, if ever there was one. At the time of which we are now speaking, she was eighty years old. She had never originally been a tall woman, as most of her family were; she was now nearly double, and so round-backed as to be positively deformed. She had small sharp dark eyes, on which she wore spectacles when she did not wish to see or to be seen. At other times she laid her glasses aside and looked like a hawk. She had a small, well-shaped nose, somewhat hooked, and a sharp, well-defined chin. Her mouth was long and thin, but furnished frequently with formidable teeth. At other times they were to be seen by her side in a finger-glass of water. She wore a brown wig, with elf-like locks on each side, and a neat broad-bordered cap. She was alway dressed in black silk, and wore, as her only ornament, a very massive gold chain. She had the reputation of being a shrewd, well-read, and remarkably honest woman, of most re-

tentive memory and strong principles; eccentric to the last degree. Many feared her for herself; others flattered her for the sake of her nephew. She was remarkably just, and prided herself upon it. Consequently she escaped the distribution of petty alms to her neighbours, who could neither be said to want nor to deserve them. She was capable of making great exertions, physically and mentally; and was never so happy as in caustic denunciations of humbug. The villagers regarded her as all-powerful: something of a 'witch.' Had she been anything but a Carrington, fire and faggot would have been her portion.

CHAPTER II.

THE FAMILY CONCLAVE.

'Quand le corps se porte bien, le conseil est bon.'

'Πολλῶν δ' ἀγρομένων, τῷ πείσεαι ὅς κεν ἀρίστην
Βουλὴν βουλεύσῃ.'—Hom., *Iliad*, i., v. 70.

'Dinner, my lady,' said the butler, throwing open the door.

'Come, Aunt Philly;' and Sir Michael bent his long thin figure to raise the little old woman from her chair, who assisted herself with a handsome malacca cane. The Rev. Walter Carrington offered his arm to his cousin Evelyn. Lady Carrington passed hers through that of Mr. Hugh Darville, and Stafford followed alone. It was a strictly family party; in fact, a council of war, at which the real actor was content to appear in a subordinate part. The man who pulls the strings is

generally least visible, though the play cannot go on without him.

There can be no doubt that everyone in that room had his or her mind bent upon one subject. Neither the beauty of the apartment (and it was a handsome saloon, hung with furniture that had once been costly, and with pictures that still were valuable), nor the excellence of the dinner and wines, which was remarkable, attracted a moment's real attention, though they came in for their due portion of the conversation. Lady Carrington 'never ate better fish than the man of Saxonby supplied,' and Aunt Philly thought the 'brown sherry nearly as good as her own;' a present from the Spanish Ambassador when in London at the peace in 1815. It is an exceedingly difficult thing to go straight to the point, sometimes even when a whole family have determined upon thinking of nothing else; just as a child picks up all the stale, dry crumbs, before he comes to the well-buttered tit-bit of crust in the corner, or the Irishman tells you of every road

in the county before he directs you by the one by which you should go. I suppose there is a certain refinement of delicacy in such reticence; a kind of practical euphemism, which would rather imply than pronounce a truth; *à fortiori*, if it be an unpleasant one.

So Stafford, by way of encouraging the party, went at once into horseflesh. It was seized upon with avidity, and well shaken, as if they had no better use for their teeth. 'So you like your new horse, Stafford. Well, I'm glad of that. Jumped those rails out of Leighton's meadow; I've no doubt he did; those quarters are made for jumping.'

'Indeed he did, sir, most magnificently; I don't know who's been schooling him with the curb, but he gets his head up a little; one of the men, perhaps, with not the best hands in the world.'

'Oh!' said Sir Michael; 'he did so the day I rode him; but if you put your hands down, he always drops his head as he comes to the fence. However, ride him for a day or two

with a martingale on the curb-rein, and you'll have no trouble with him at all.'

'Oh! papa dear, he jumps most beautifully. I wish you could have seen him,' said Evelyn, becoming enthusiastic in the cause.

'And what became of you, miss?' said the baronet.

'I stopped in the road, my dear papa; we couldn't afford to risk two necks at a time, you know.'

'Then where had you been, Stafford,' said his mother, 'that you came home by the Saxonby road?' who began to rejoice that the conversation had taken a turn away from electioneering, having due regard to her husband's digestion.

'To Rutherford, mother; we found Skeffington and three or four men come down to begin the season. Mentmore was there; he's going to Newmarket to see his horses, and then he's coming here.'

'By your invitation? It's a bad time to have him here.'

'By his own, my dear mother. Flattering, was it not?' and Stafford Carrington, who did not conceive that they could have been honoured by anybody's company, smiled listlessly.

'What sort of a person is Lord Mentmore?' asked Miss Philadelphia, shooting out a sharp glance from her twinkling eyes.

'Mentmore, Aunt Philly?' said Stafford in reply, 'the handsomest man in England.'

'So was his grandfather, sir, but not the wisest or the best;' rejoined the old lady, who had some piquant recollections of the early days of the Regency.

'Well! Mentmore's not the worst, aunt, at all events.'

'I suppose he plays?'

'I never saw him. Indeed I believe he hates the trouble.'

'I hear he lost thirty thousand pounds last year, sir, and that must have been ingenious in a gentleman who never plays.' The old lady looked very astute, and took a sip of her

favourite brown sherry. It was quite evident that she had made up her mind that Lord Mentmore was not the best companion for her nephew.

'Excuse me, Aunt Philly, but that's not so difficult as you imagine. His commissioner managed it all for him.'

'And what's a commissioner? He must be a very expensive addition to a gentleman's household.'

'Mentmore backs his own horses; and if he were to lay against his own, and back other people's, with his information he might improve his account. They won't let him win till he does.'

'I don't see that it makes much difference whether he gambles with dice or with horse-flesh.'

You see Aunt Philly's was a practical mind.

'Those are antiquated notions, madam,' said Sir Michael, who was suspected of having committed himself on the turf in his early days, and

took a more lenient view of such matters than his aunt.

'I don't understand such things, Michael,' said the aunt, 'but the result seems to me much the same.'

'The devil's not so black as he's painted,' said Lady Carrington, who was a strong-minded woman. 'I hear it was only ten thousand: what shall we do with him when we get him?'

'Send him out with the hounds four days a-week, and let him shoot the covers the other two.'

'That's just what he's fit for, I suppose,' said Miss Evelyn.

'You don't know him, Evelyn. However, we've not pheasants enough for more than one day, and the leaf's not off yet,' said Stafford.

'Then send him out canvassing,' said Mr. Darville, who had not taken much part in the conversation. 'Lend him a good hack, Sir Michael, and make him useful as well as ornamental.'

Canvassing! The ice was broken, and now the current was running freely. Everybody

felt that the lawyer had hit the right nail on the head; it was their business to drive it home; and as soon as the dessert was on table, and the Rev. Walter had said grace, the company laid themselves out to their work, like hard-held horses beginning to feel their way.

The first thing they did was to proclaim war to the knife against the impertinent rebel who had dared to disturb the peace of the county. This meant the peace of a very excellent clique who formed the county. Nor was the violence of their anger directed more against the fact than against the individual. There might have been some excuse for the ambition of a man whose ancestors had had a stake in ——shire, or who were admitted to be of the same class as themselves. There might have been some excitement in breaking a lance with such an one. But there was no glory to be got by the defeat of a retired manufacturer, whose father bought the estate on which he lived, and who had added to it; at the expense of the Carringtons, every acre of valuable land by which it was surrounded. To be

honest, there was not much to be said in favour of Mr. Bradfield, senior. He was cruel, purse-proud, and mean towards his inferiors; self-sufficient, even insolent, to his equals in position but inferiors in wealth; and cringing to the real aristocracy of the county, who tolerated a man whose enormous riches could make him inconvenient to them in a thousand ways. He had done well to put forward his son instead of himself; at least, nothing was known of Lawrence Bradfield which could add to the unpopularity of his father. His reputation was a university one, in which he had shone brilliantly. He was known as one of the first men of his year, and contemporary history affirms that he had improved his natural and acquired powers since his degree, by sedulous study of the laws and constitution of his country; facts which fitted him peculiarly for the honours to which he aspired, and which were likely to be attended with more success than the political consistency of a very worthy, but not strong-minded, baronet. Need we say that Mr. Brad-

field, senior, had begun life as a violent Radical of the school over which self-interest predominates; he had slowly changed to a Whig, as more acceptable to the great persons with whom he was desirous of associating; and would in his son represent that moderate form of order combined with progression, which may be Liberal Conservatism or Conservative liberality, according to the views of the popular assembly in which the professor's oratory is to take its airing. One thing was quite certain: he was not a Tory, either in himself or his son; and he was sure to meet with that amount of vituperation which fell to the lot of everybody, great or small, who did not believe in the doctrines of the Carrington charter. Sir Michael had been tried once with a contested election, and was at daggers drawn for six months afterwards with a minority which numbered many personal friends. Nobody talked Whiggery before him or my lady, whatever they might feel.

'Darville, you know all about this: how did it happen?' said Lady Carrington. She had

great faith in Darville. Not in his talents, but in his energy, and in his honesty. Sir Michael talked most to him, but my lady believed in him.

'Bradfield is pig-headed, that's the truth, and fancies slights where none are intended. That's the bottom of it. Perhaps his son's university success, and supposed talents, may have had something to do with it.'

'Slights? why the fellow kills foxes,' said Sir Michael, 'and as an ex-master of the —— shire hounds, no man knew better than he the heinousness of such an offence, or was better prepared to punish it.'

'I don't think that was his fault, papa dear: at least, Stafford said it was not; and he discharged his keeper as soon as he heard of it.' If any oil was to be extracted for troubled waters from this family, it always came from the younger branches of it. Stafford, however, was in the present case incapable of ordinary justice.

'And there never is an atom of scent over

his park. I never saw hounds run over it in my life,' continued the baronet, without noticing his daughter's interruption. Whether that was an accident belonging to, or a consequent of, his political opinion, no one asked; indeed, no one doubted that it was the latter.

'Tom Leighton says hounds always ran over it in my grandfather's time,' said the rector, who was well posted in foxes and scent, and knew every run in the county that had taken place during two generations, at least.

'That's quite a different thing, Walter; I dare say there were many things, then, in your grandfather's time, which you'll never see again,' said Lady Carrington.

'And a great many things now that my poor brother never dreamt of. There's a school for the children, sir, and a church, and a well-drained village, and poor allotments, and ——,' this was Miss Philly.

'And an institute, where they talk Radicalism, and teach the poor to despise the gentry. I always said steam would be the ruin of this

country. When the new lines come we shan't be able to ride a mile after hounds without a check. It is all this infernal manufacturing, and building over the country. He's made Somerton a regular town,' said the squire.

'Perhaps that's the reason hounds don't run over that country so well as formerly, Michael,' suggested the old lady. 'If we had done more for those people, we should have left less for them to do; and then we might have had it all our own way.'

'Why, aunt?' said Lady Carrington, with a start.

'Why, aunt?' said Stafford, with a yawn.

'My dear Aunt Philly, what do you mean?' said the little Tory, with the red camellia in her hair.

'I mean, my dear, that if the old county families had done their duty when I was a girl, we shouldn't have had others doing it for us now I'm an old woman. I know they all think I'm cracked, Michael; but I'm not. The

world goes on while I stand still, so I've more time to think than if I went with it.'

'But, my dear madam,—my dear Miss Carrington,' roared Mr. Darville, 'my excellent client, the late baronet, surely—'

'There, that will do—I'm not deaf to-night, it don't suit me. Everybody knows I'm a Carrington, and, as far as an old woman with one leg in the grave can be so, a stanch supporter of the family interest. I'm going canvassing for you, Michael, through thick and thin; but it's as well you should hear the truth sometimes.'

Here the old lady took up her spectacles, and adjusted them for observation.

'I suppose Rutherford is all right this time, Darville.'

'Yes; he's quarrelled with Lord Laneham, and he'd rather vote against his conscience than not spite him. I'm glad Stafford and his sister were over there to-day; did he say anything about his visit?' asked Brotherton.

'What did Rutherford say to-day, Stafford?'

'Said there were lots of foxes at all his pheasants.'

'That's what he always does say: what about the election?'

'Nothing at all: I don't think he knows of the opposition.'

'Indeed he does though,' rejoined Darville; 'I told him myself.'

'How long have you known it, sir?' shot out Aunt Philly.

'How long? Oh, well! known it? I've heard of it, Miss Philadelphia, two or three days. I couldn't help it.'

'I hope you haven't helped it, sir; I think you should have told my nephew instantly. Don't believe a word of it,' added the old lady, with an aside which smote the remotest corner of the room.

Darville was a bad-tempered man; but his interest always prevented any breach between him and the Carringtons. His politics were unimpeachable, as well they might be; for he owed all he had to them, besides the occu-

pation and advancement of nephews, nieces, and relations, without end. He was, however, agent, and transacted business in connection with the Sommerton estate, for the Bradfields, which gave him a less strong position than he would otherwise have held. He bore the old lady's rudeness with moderately well-assumed calm. He was strong in something —either his own integrity or Sir Michael's favour.

'How is the register, Darville? what shall we win by?'

'You by seven hundred, Spence by three.'

'Is that a certainty?' inquired Sir Michael again; 'what should we do in case of accidents? — fellows will turn round, now-a-days, when you least expect it.'

'In case of accidents, which are almost impossible,' rejoined the lawyer, 'we should sacrifice Spence.'

'Pleasant for Colonel Spence,' said Stafford Carrington; 'but a stop-gap is not of much good, unless you can throw him away when

you've done with him. He'd feel flattered if he heard Mr. Darville's suggestion.'

'What will the Crackborough party do?'

'They'll write to you to say that their tenants will not be interfered with, and that you are at liberty to canvass them; and they'll order Manks to go round the week before, and give them due notice of old Crackborough's preference for tenants who think as their landlord.'

'I suppose Packington is dead against us?' asked Stafford.

'Indeed he's nothing of the sort. He's quite sure to be with us.'

'Why? He owes Bradfield a lot of money, and I know he got his brother a good appointment in Manchester, in the Stamps and Taxes, or something of that sort.'

'He's got all he can get out of the Bradfields, and he knows there's nothing more to come; so he'll try your party now. The Whigs regard him as safe.'

'What a pretty blackguard he must be,' said

young Carrington; 'we should be quite as well without him.'

'He can command about thirty votes, so it won't do to be particular.'

'What do you think about the Suttons—they're doubtful?' asked Lady Carrington.

'They were; but you left them out of your archery meeting last summer, my lady; and I'm told they haven't forgotten it, and won't forgive it.'

'Of course I left them out—so I did some hundreds of others. You know it was a small party made for Lady Sarah and the Duchess; we might as well have asked the Bradfields themselves,' replied Lady Carrington.

'The rest could afford to be left out, but the Suttons could not. They were just struggling into society with the old woman's diamonds and the son's stud at Melton, and—'

'Yes; and have rechristened their lawn and shrubberies Nuneham Place.'

'They were just coming to the surface, my dear,' said the old lady, 'and you shoved them

under again. Unfortunately you can't drown them outright, so you should have given them a helping hand.'

'I was wrong, Aunt Philly,' said Lady Carrington. 'I made a mistake like the woman in the shop at Leamington, who was desired by Miss Sutton to send a parcel for her to Nuneham Place. The girl, innocently enough, said, "What number, please, miss?" for which inadvertency the custom was withdrawn.'

'If my nephew is to represent the county, you must represent your half of it, Lady Carrington; and I think you will be quite as much bored at home as Michael at St. Stephen's.'

'How's Doddington, Gorsefield, and round about Chessington? I hear that Bradfield has been buying property there with a view to building and smelting.'

'It won't do—there's no railway sufficiently near; besides, the squire at Doddington votes at Chessington in right of the kennels, so he'd be safe to go with you.'

'I'm afraid you'll have the Dissenters against

you. Growler's a regular firebrand, and he's always talking about Walter as an absentee and a pluralist, and wondering why the work of so important a parish is to be neglected. In fact, that country,' added Mr. Darville, 'is not what it used to be.'

'But Walter has a curate there, who has established night-schools, and reading-clubs, and worsted-stocking subscriptions, and a Dorcas, and all those sorts of things,' said Lady Carrington, 'and his greatest amusement is coursing, which seems to me to be a very harmless amusement, except for the poor hares.'

'That's the reason the Dissenters are so angry,' said Darville. 'Young Fairchild has beat Growler at his own game. They like a fellow that hunts and shoots a bit; and leaves the people to them.'

'Then you'd better send Walter Carrington there, and have the curate here to help Evelyn and me, with the old women,' said Miss Philly, who was determined to be equally pleasant all round. Indeed, whether it was that the family

spirits were soured by the contemplated opposition, or, that the weather was against charitable feelings, the conversation had taken a turn which appeared to unite them all in hostility to everybody else. If the impression upon the reader is bad, we regret that he should see a very amiable family at an unamiable time; and only hope, for their sake, that he has been placed in the same circumstances himself. It is right to speak well of our enemies, but religion and politics are exceptional cases, in which all one's charity is wanted for the support of one's friends. The Bishop of O——, when he recommends to his clergy an uncompromising distinction between that of the Church and all other creeds, has seen necessary to add an injunction to avoid giving offence. Perhaps the right reverend divine will explain this difference between precept and practice, and carry the latter into the intricacies of a county election.

'Do you know young Bradfield, Stafford?' said his mother after a pause, while the

wine was being placed on the table, and handed round by the brown wigged and gouty old gentleman who called himself 'the butler.'

'I know him by sight, that is, I did when he was up at Christ Church,' replied young Carrington, when thus appealed to. 'But Evelyn knows him better than I do.' This was said with a smile; but smiles vary, and this carried with it a trifle of badinage. Lady Carrington and Aunt Philly looked up at once. 'What sort of a person is he, Evelyn?'

'Tall, fair, rather good looking, and evidently a very clever man,' said the young lady without hesitation, but with heightened colour. I have met him a few times during the last season; but mamma knows as much of him as I do, only she doesn't dance.'

'What was he like when you knew him at Oxford?' demanded the great aunt.

'Very slow; but you know he wasn't in my set.'

'I presume not; was he a clever man?'

'He got a good first; but I shouldn't think he would set the Thames on fire.'

'Nor the college, sir, as I'm tōld you and Lord Skeffington very nearly did between you.'

'Skeffington had more to do with water than fire, aunt. It was he who put the pink on to the mercury during a frost, and broke the ice all round.'

'For which he was sent away, and you were rusticated, I believe, sir.'

'We thought it rather hard though, especially after his excuse about the fine arts, and the colouring of the antique, to say nothing of an execrable pun about putting the mercury into water-colours, which the dean capped by something worse, to the effect that they had long had their mercury in lake, and were perfectly satisfied with it as it was.'

'Will he fight, Stafford?' asked the old man.

'If he begins, he will; but I should think it was sorely against the grain; he's much more given to hard study than to hard fighting.'

'I think he's had nothing to do with this

himself: it's his father, and Crackborough's at the bottom of the whole affair. Darville, what are you drinking?'

'Sherry, Sir Michael. They have stopped the port.'

'Gout? that's bad;' and the baronet sighed to see a lawyer with the gout, which in former days could not be earned by everybody; and was hereditary only with those who had grandfathers.

'What is the first thing to be done, Darville? the address will be out to-morrow.'

'Most probably, Sir Michael. Then we must have yours, and you must be off to Saxonby; we'll have the "Lion" as usual; and you must give us a speech next market day. The Church is a capital watchword, because they all think they understand that, and that flatters them; Colonial self-government is another, because none of them understand that, and that is flattering to you. Say a good deal about cheap bread, meaning cheap labour, which between ourselves it does not mean, and the injustice of

the income tax; and blow up the French Emperor, he's very unpopular just now, on the score of additional expenses; and be sure to finish with some allusion to fox-hunting, the farmers like that, it has a liberal sound, and costs nothing.'

'And what will Bradfield go for, do you suppose?' asked Sir Michael, of his legal adviser and political tutor.

'He'll go for the education of the poor on scientific principles, which won't suit the farmers, who have no idea of seeing the people better educated than themselves, especially when they're asked to pay for it. Of course he'll be of the peace party, which he'll wish to obtain by alliance, and you by war. I don't suppose he's fool enough to talk about the ballot; but you've nothing to do but to say it's un-English, and that, if it were not, it wouldn't answer the end proposed.'

Sir Michael had long been in leading-strings. On all social questions he submitted implicitly to Lady Carrington; in politics Mr. Darville

had not only managed his entire business for him, but had presented him septennially, or whenever there was a dissolution, with a creed ready cut and dried. So that he was not more the exponent of the doctrines of a party, than of those sentiments which were likely to attract the majority of the landowners and cultivators of the soil of ——shire. It would have been quite sufficient to have known that the manufacturing interest advocated a principle of right, for the worthy squire of Spring Vale to have raised his standard in favour of wrong. He was honest, proud, prejudiced, and a thoroughly good man. But his convictions were purely based upon externals, and, though frequently in accordance with right, were almost entirely the offspring of prejudice or pressure.

The discussion we have heard at the family conclave was one of many which had taken place, and which might have taken place, whenever an opposition was talked of, had it been three times a week. A farmer, a glorious half-educated, drab-breeched, and top-booted

agriculturist, was a sort of household god which had its favourite niche in Spring Vale Manor; he could do no wrong, excepting by riding over a hound; to be a farmer, like Horace's philosopher, was to be a king. On the other hand, if the agricultural interests had got it into their head that the county was made for them, and if long use and gentle titillation had persuaded them of the fact, the last few years had seen a totally opposite faction usurp a situation to which their antecedents had given them no claim. It was not in their case the growth of intelligence, but that of wealth, which from time to time gave signs of a revolutionary action, and which it was hoped might break forth into open opposition to the reigning powers. These innovators had in many cases bought up the estates of needy noblemen and gentlemen, and had made no secret of their hostility. The Earl of Crackborough, an hereditary Whig, who had long lived in hopeless despondency, in amity with his fellows, was the great patron of this

division. His interest and property were great in the county; he had the character of a generous man, which he did not deserve. He saw an opening at the present time, and proceeded to select a cat's-paw to do his work. Had he started his own son or nephew, there would have been some growlings, a fight, and a renewal of former friendships; but the body of new men, who had lately crept into the county, were barely noticed by the aristocracy; and Bradfield, notwithstanding many advantages, was one of the least popular of his class. Certain reasons, connected with the property he had acquired, had tended to make him particularly obnoxious to the enmity of the Carringtons, and by consequence to that of many other of the county families. His notions were extreme, even for his own party; his private character was unamiable, his ostentation absurd, and his meanness and ill-temper remarkable. The Earl of Crackborough had made a mistake, and soon he knew it.

It was the fashion in Sir Michael's house for

the ladies to sit after dinner a considerable time, indeed as long as the men. Lady Carrington liked wine in moderation, and she liked men, much better than her own sex. Besides this, she usually managed to quarrel with her aunt, or fall asleep with her daughter, so that on strictly private occasions the table rose together. They were about to do so now, when a servant entered the room and presented a card. Sir Michael read aloud, ' "Mr. Bradfield, Sommerton Hall." Where is he?'

'In the library.'

'Then make the fire up, and put a lamp into the room. Say I will be there in a minute or two.'

'What's the meaning of this, Darville?'

'Let me see him for you, Sir Michael,' said Darville, who seemed nervously alive to some *contretemps* in the meeting of his two clients. 'Some compromise perhaps, some offer to make an arrangement, probably.'

'Arrangement indeed; a d——d scoundrel who comes here to rob me of my seat, or of

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

several thousand pounds. No, no, Darville, I'll go myself. You can't help your client's impertinence, I know; but I'll go myself, and if I want you I will send for you. You'd better go to my lady and talk the matter over with her.'

The baronet rang the bell, and proceeded to the library without more ado.

CHAPTER III.

MR. BRADFIELD'S PROPOSAL.

'Dem Entschlossenen ist nichts unmöglich.'—*Germ. Prov.*

Mr. Bradfield, sen., was shown into the library, as Sir Michael had been told; and in a few minutes the servant had made a bright cheerful blaze, and placed a lamp upon the table. The room was remarkable for its size, and the beauty of the richly-carved old oaken panels with which it was surrounded. The single lamp did but little towards lighting it, and the fitful gleams of the bright wood-fire gave it a vivid and gloomy appearance. There was something inexpressibly grand not only in its proportions, but in its colour; half light always impresses us with solemnity, and solemnity with a sense of age. Spring Vale Manor House was one of the most beautiful

in the Midland counties. A part of it had been built in the reign of Henry VII., and no portion of it was more modern than the time of his granddaughter Elizabeth. On one side of the room in question were four long and deep oriel windows looking to the lawn, on the opposite side were handsome book-shelves at intervals, separated from each other by elaborately carved panels. At each end was an open and beautifully-sculptured chimney-piece, from one of which the gigantic half-burnt log, newly stirred by the servant, emitted its fitful sparks. The ceiling was highly enriched with scrollwork, towards which the spiral circles of the book-shelves pointed; and on the panels, between the book-cases, were the grim warriors of the middle ages, the loosely-robed statesmen of the Stuarts, a poet of the reign of Anne, and a scarlet-coated truncheoned general of the time of George III. Such was the character of the room in which Mr. Abel Bradfield found himself, with one lamp, awaiting the coming of Sir Michael Carrington. He had a few

minutes to himself, and it is not astonishing that his mind took that turn with which the externals of the place impressed his senses.

Now what sort of a person was Abel Bradfield? Had he been of an imaginative turn of mind, in those few minutes he might have peopled that room with the shadowy outlines of an age long past. The rebellious baron of feudal times would not have been misplaced at the head of his retainers, rousing their passions, or inflaming their appetites with the incentive to rude intemperance. It was a room of solemn state for the deliberations of a monarch, for the cruelties of an Inquisition, for the condemnation of a traitor, for the very execution itself of the condemned. There the ear of fancy might have drunk in the sounds of barbarous revelry, of chivalrous determination, of political sagacity. The solemn hymns, the forbidden ritual of the first martyrs, might well have floated through those groined arches, or the spiritual world have sent back the troubled and wandering manes to haunt the scenes of

unassoilzed guilt. In fact there was nothing of the grand, the terrible, or the mysterious which might not have been connected with the room, and the time; there was nothing of light, of cheerful, and of commonplace, that seemed capable of any connection with it.

But Abel Bradfield was neither a poet, nor an historian, nor an antiquary. Taste he affected, refinement he affected, but he had neither. He was a purse-proud, dissatisfied, tradesman, in all but the name, and though he might have talked of these things, he never felt them. When therefore he looked at the room and the books and the pictures, he felt envious of their possessor. 'Curse this man,' said he to himself, 'why cannot I have these things—have them? I will have them; what money can buy, I can buy.' At the same time he saw that though Sommerton had cost thousands more than Sir Michael had in his whole estate, there was nothing like the library at Spring Vale Manor. There was one thing he could not have; and, strange to say for a

strong-minded, practical, business-like man, the want stirred him cruelly. It seems odd enough to you or to me that such a man could have felt the absence of what could apparently have been of no practical use to him. It seems almost childish. Yet as he looked round the room he coveted really nothing but those grim warriors, those statesmen, that poet, and field maréchal with his bâton. He knew he could buy everything else, but he could not buy them. If Spring Vale Manor itself belonged to him to-morrow, with everything in it, as it stood, those pictures would still be the possessions of an age and a name with which the Bradfields had had nothing to do.

What a strange thing this is—this family pride! this love of ancestry! and with this man it was a ruling passion. He knew he might have been great, had he not been mean; his son probably would be so. He might have been good, or learned, or accomplished, *Sapiens et Rex*; he was wealthy; he might have everything that money could procure; but neither

he nor his son could be noble. It was a sore point with him. He could persuade others of almost anything, even of his high birth; but he could not persuade himself of it. Whence this desire in men of no weakness? probably from its very inaccessibility. Wealth could procure him everything; but he never could be a Carrington. It soured his disposition. Although the pretension to high birth in those who have it not is despicable, it holds a high rank in the qualifications of those who really possess it. They are frequently and strongly impressed by it; and when higher motives are deficient it has been known to exercise a great and good influence. For the highly-born we should be sorry to see it despised, to the lowly we recommend the cultivation of a better principle of action. Abel Bradfield's thoughts had taken a shorter cut, and a different one, to our discussion, and in the midst of his reverie the baronet entered the room.

These two men stood face to face, and as Sir Michael advanced towards the fireplace, near

which his neighbour was standing, this chill October evening, the most casual observer might have remarked the difference between them. They were types of two classes, wide asunder at that period, and they were as wide asunder as the two types could be. Both had their faults, but there was scarcely a virtue or vice which belonged to them in common.

Sir Michael Carrington was very tall and thin: he stooped more than slightly, from the neck, not from the shoulders, which were straight and flat. His face wore the stamp of high breeding; the features were thin and delicate; the eyes grey, with strong, dark brows and long lashes; the mouth set, and rather obstinate; the nose large, but the nostrils long and handsome; the forehead high, but narrow; and the hair covering the head, but straight and grey; complexion sanguine and clear, as of one much given to the open air; his hands a little coarse for a man of such palpably high breeding, probably from field sports, as they were said to be the finest on a young horse that England

had ever produced. He was plainly dressed in black, and wore short breeches and black silk stockings. He had not yet begun trousers, either night or day.

Abel Bradfield was a tall man, too, but not so tall, upright as he stood, as the baronet with his stoop. He had come from Sommerton without those graces of the toilette in which Sir Michael had risen from the dinner table. He was dressed in a plain frock coat, coloured trousers, and ordinary boots; he wore a coloured neck-cloth, and his coat was buttoned at the top, but opened below, where an old-fashioned watch-ribbon and seals were manifest. His face was hard and flat; his features straight, and, though they were well shaped, his eyes had a wasted-out appearance, and looked cruel. He was closely shaven and cropped, and his face was without a particle of colour. Under ordinary circumstances, he looked like a wealthy man of the middle class, sufficiently conscious of his own powers; at present he was the picture of well-feigned humility. He might have been

any age from forty to sixty. He was nearer the latter. He was standing when Sir Michael entered the room.

'To what am I to attribute the honour of this visit?' said the baronet; and, as he spoke, he continued to advance towards the table, on which he placed a small silver candlestick, without extinguishing it, or making any movement towards taking a seat. We regret to add, for the honour of Sir Michael's hospitality, that he forgot to offer one to his guest, too.

'I could not help feeling, Sir Michael,' replied the other, looking, not down, nor up, but right away over the baronet's shoulder, 'that this movement on our part, of which you must have heard to-day, at Saxonby, must have an—an—unfriendly, a—a—hostile appearance on our part, which it is far from my desire that it should assume.' Here the speaker ventured to look at his companion, but he saw nothing in the hardly-restrained temper (for such it was) of Sir Michael to encourage him to proceed. He wisely waited.

'I should be glad to know whom you mean to include in your party before I acknowledge any opponent but yourself, sir.' Sir Michael literally shook with suppressed indignation, and his thin lips closed tightly as his nostrils expanded.

'Let me assure you, Sir Michael, that I have intruded upon you at this time, that I might seize the first opportunity of stating my regret at being the cause of personal inconvenience.'

Sir Michael regarded the ex-manufacturer with a contempt scarcely to be expressed. 'What! fight the battle with such a cur?' thought he, 'upon the terms I would have fought it with the Crackboroughs, or Packington, or Glanville, or any of the old Whig families.'

'I don't know what Mr. Bradfield,'—here he looked at the card he held in his hand, as if he could not recall the name of so insignificant a person without it—'what Mr. Bradfield may consider personal inconvenience, but such regrets are no answer to my question.'

'Of course I am aware that the sentiments

of the county have been frequently expressed, and so ably represented in the person of your own family, Sir Michael, but times are a little changed. Excuse me for the—the—suggestion; and—and—there is a party—'

'Yes, sir, there is a party,' struck in the baronet, carried beyond all bounds by the recollection of the personal inconvenience hinted at, and by the fawning sycophancy of his opponent, 'there is a party, which would never have moved in the matter, but for the meddling interference of other persons, who can have no object in view but the setting a county in flames to gratify their own vanity. The principles you advocate have no sort of claim upon the gentlemen of ——shire. They've been tried before. There was some triumph in contesting it with Packington or Glanville, but it doesn't appear that either of these gentlemen is disposed to risk the peace of the county for the sake of putting the Conservatives to a useless expense.'

During this speech, which was delivered volubly enough, but with occasional hesitation,

caused by the violence of the baronet's anger, Abel Bradfield dropped his eyes and bit his lip sharply. But if it be true that self-restraint is the mark of high breeding, certainly the manufacturer had the best of the blood. In truth, at no time was Sir Michael accustomed to restrain himself. He was not naturally a violent person; in his home he was always a perfect gentleman; his patience and determination with a young horse were exemplary; but he blew up his field in fine old-fashioned language when he was master of the ——shire hounds; he exacted implicit obedience from his tenants; and cursed and swore with a heartiness worthy of the old school at anybody that thwarted him. Sir Michael had neither the dignity of a great man, nor the patience of a good one; but he had his virtues, and one of them was openness, and another courage. Had the squire of Sommerton resented the insolence of the baronet of Spring Vale Manor, it is probable that he might have excited less antipathy than fell to his lot. His Christian patience was sadly belied; and as

he turned the other cheek the baronet did not hesitate to smite it.

'Sir Michael, I am, indeed, anxious that, as neighbours, no ill-feeling should exist between us.'

'D— his impudence,' muttered Sir Michael.

'I have, therefore, ventured out to-night, trusting that a few minutes' conversation might perhaps give me a closer insight into your feelings on this subject. With your great experience of county politics, and the influential position you and your family have held for so many generations, is there nothing that you, Sir Michael, would venture to suggest, which would satisfy the—the—reasonable demands of—of—well—a very large party?'

'I don't understand you, sir; and am as far from the object of your visit as when I first came into the room.' The baronet had assumed a dogged appearance of injury in lieu of his suppressed passion, which sat well upon him; he threw himself into a chair on one side of the fireplace and motioned to Abel Bradfield to do the same.

'Has no sort of compromise ever occurred to you, Sir Michael, as possible? It is far from my wish to be at enmity with a near neighbour; and if, by any means—'

'None whatever, sir. Colonel Spence deserves—'

'Colonel Spence, my dear sir? Nothing could be further from my intention than to propose anything derogatory to a man of his position; but if it were possible—second thoughts are often best—and if by our retirement I could prove to you my wish to—to—to—' The rest of the sentence stuck in the throat of the manufacturer, for, what with the scheme which he had in view, and his apprehension of offending his own friends, and the Earl of Crackborough, he was beginning to doubt the feasibility of his intentions.

'Retirement?' The baronet hardly knew what to make of this suggestion; it was so utterly unlike himself, or his conception of anything that could have happened under the circumstances; and although he hated the man

cordially, he was fully alive to the fact of saving some thousands, which he could very ill afford. 'Retirement? That's quite another matter. I was at a loss to understand the reason of an opposition. It must be very clear that the chances of success—'

'We'll not enter upon that subject, Sir Michael. The last thing I should wish would be to place myself in antagonism to the general feeling of the neighbourhood; and certainly the hope of saving you from personal anxiety will add to the inducement to retire from the position with which I was to be honoured in the person of my son.'

'Mr. Bradfield, it would be absurd to pretend that this contest was of no importance to the Conservative interest; every man has a right to his own opinions. For your personal expressions of regard I ought to be much obliged, and—'

'I trust, Sir Michael, that the unfortunate circumstances which—'

'That's a painful subject, sir, and the less said

about it the better. You must not be surprised that circumstances make it difficult to forget that a stranger has usurped the property which belonged to this family since the days of Henry VIII.;' and Sir Michael flushed with the painful remembrance of the facts, of which every walk, every ride, nay, every prospect from the windows of his house reminded him. Bradfield affected deep feeling of sympathy.

Both were silent for a few moments. Sir Michael was about to rise, when Bradfield rejoined, fixing his eyes on the ground, and speaking with considerable hesitation—'If I might venture without offence, accident has—yes, accident, Sir Michael, has put me in possession—circumstances have arisen which might smooth the difficulties under which the question of our property lies.' There was so much embarrassment in the speaker's manner, as well as his words, that none but a person conversant with the circumstances could have understood him.

'You speak in enigmas, Mr. Bradfield.'

'Hear me with patience, sir. I feel the difficulties of my position in regard to yourself; yet there are families of rank in this county, as well as in many others, in which the manufacturing interest, the representatives of the commercial powers of England, are regarded as almost on a footing—yes, Sir Michael—on a footing with the great agricultural interests of the country.'

'That, sir, is a matter of opinion, at all events;' and the baronet drew himself up to his full height.

'The late Sir Robert Peel—'

'Was a deserter from the ranks of those who had pushed him into place and supported him in it. But I don't see the drift of your remarks.'

'I have then, to be brief, I have, Sir Michael,' and here again the parvenu stopped, but seeing nothing very threatening in Sir Michael's face, he resumed, looking straight over his shoulder. 'I have a son, and you—'

'Yes, sir, I have a son too, who, I hope, will

represent this county, Mr. Bradfield, when you and I are at rest.' The good temper of the tone which the baronet had assumed since his expectation of a contest was diminished, encouraged him to proceed.

'I was not going to say that; I would have said a daughter, Sir Michael.'

'Then allow me to state that the coupling of the two names together is, whatever others may think, a gross insult, and I am surprised that you should have come to my own house to offer it.' Sir Michael walked towards the bell which he rang violently. 'No, sir, I couldn't purchase the peace of England at such a compromise of personal self-respect. Of your son I know nothing; but if he came here as a pauper to-morrow to ask for my daughter, and she was again the coheiress to every acre of land which your father and you have pillaged from the Carrington property, I would rather have received him as her suitor than as the son and heir of Abel Bradfield. Mr. Bradfield's carriage, Simpson; has my lady rung for tea?'

'Yes, Sir Michael.'

'Then I'll wish Mr. Bradfield a good evening.'

Simpson stood respectfully at the door, whilst his master walked steadily but quickly out, leaving his late guest in the full enjoyment of the Spring Vale library.

We have said that the manufacturer was not a good-tempered man. Had he been so he might have been forgiven for an outbreak; he was however too much surprised to reply before Sir Michael was gone, and as he followed the servant to the hall door a saturnine sneer was all that betrayed his indignation, as he muttered to himself, 'I can afford to laugh; let those laugh that win; that last speech has cost you a good five thousand, my haughty friend, and your daughter thirty thousand a year. I suppose you can afford it.'

The servant stood at the carriage door while Mr. Abel Bradfield finished his soliloquy. 'Where to, sir?' said the man.

'Home, sir, to Sommerton—where the devil should I go to from here?'

'Papa dear,' said Evelyn Carrington, as her father entered the room, 'your tea's almost cold; I've rung for some more.'

'Thank you, my dear, no tea, I don't want any tea,' and the baronet walked straight to the fireplace at once. 'Darville.'

'Sir Michael.'

'Do you know what that infernal cur, Mr. Bradfield, wanted here to-night?'

'Probably to ascertain his chance of success by visiting the head-quarters of the enemy. Perhaps to make some proposal. But that's out of rule; he should have applied to me, as your agent—'

'He's not only a rogue, but a coward; have as little to do with him as possible, Darville.'

'I see but little of him, Sir Michael, excepting in the way of business; we lawyers are open to all calls upon our time, and you know I never talk politics, except at a general election, and then all on one side.'

'Now, my lady, won't your aunt have her rubber? Walter, you and Stafford must make

up the table to-night. I want to talk to Darville. Aunt Philly, you must take Stafford instead of me.' Saying which the squire walked out of the room followed by Darville.

Lady Carrington looked up from her cards at her son: 'I wonder what that man wanted here to-night; your father's put out about something.'

'Not very surprising, mother. It's the first time any one of that family ever set foot in the Manor House, I should think (that's the trick and two by honours).'

'Not quite the first, Stafford, unluckily for you,' said Aunt Philly, showing her suit, and leading a trump.

'I should think my father, by the look of him, intends it to be the last, at all events. Your lead, Walter.'

'Nobody knows what he may do, with Darville at his elbow,' rejoined the old lady; 'I can't trust him, sir; I have a great horror of lawyers generally, and when they tack "honest" to their name, I despair of them

altogether. I can't believe in honest Hugh Darville not being a rogue. "There is a modest backwardness in virtue to expose her naked beauties; it's the harlot vice who endeavours to set off her charms to attract men's applause." That was written by Mr. Fielding, my dear,' added the old lady, seeing her grand-niece's look of astonishment; 'it's too naughty a book to be read now-a-days, but it has more good in it than all the modern novels put together.' Here the rubber finished. 'What have we won, Stafford?'

'A double, single, and the rub, five points; I'll settle with my mother.'

'Do so; I'll take tithe of the rector. My dear, ring the bell. I'm sure my maid's come,' and the old lady shouldered her crutch.

'Surely you'll have the pony chaise, aunt. They've got it ready.'

'No, my dear, I'm much safer on foot; my woman is better than any pony in the world.'

'But it takes you so long to walk. The pony is best, you shall drive.'

'No, Evelyn, I tell you. I've a stick in one hand, and an honest patient old ass in the other, and that's enough for me. Good-night.'

The eccentric old lady rose as she spoke, hobbled slowly to the door with the assistance of her grand-nephew, Walter, who offered in vain to see her and her maid to their cottage, and took her way down the avenue. The rector remained to smoke a cigar with his cousin Stafford.

When Abel Bradfield arrived at Sommerton things were all at sixes and sevens. Mrs. Bradfield had retired to her room. Lawrence was not indoors, had gone out to smoke a cigar, and Ellen Bradfield sat alone at the tea table ready to receive her father. Ellen was the only person towards whom he never exhibited violent temper. Mrs. Bradfield had for years given way—she was accustomed to bend to fitful blasts of her husband's ill-humour as the only means of leading a quiet and peaceful life. Poor woman! it was just what she was fitted for. She was a kind-hearted, affectionate, sweet-tempered little woman, with quite sense

enough to see the results of opposition; and from the earliest days of married life had always avoided the storm. When she knew it must come, she usually went to bed.

Laurence Bradfield was not equally pacific, for he liked his own way, and usually contrived to have it. But he never descended to the indignity of a personal quarrel. The storm which blew over his mother, appeared to blow all round him and leave him standing without scathe in the midst of it all. It certainly was very provoking to see his patent superiority, and yet to know that he felt none; that it was as much an accident of his nature, as lying to a Yankee, or cruelty to a Russian. While all the world were astonished at it, he did not himself appear to be the least aware of it. Yet it had all the consequences to his opponent of a violent and unsuccessful struggle; it usually sent him away howling or skulking to his own den. Abel Bradfield admired his son without loving him; possibly Laurence loved his father without respecting him. He was not by any

means naturally a good temper, but he had arrived at such a thorough command of himself, as to be nearly unamiable from his want of sympathy with an almost universal failing.

The ill-humour in which Mr. Bradfield indulged was of the vulgarest and coarsest kind. It was perfectly undiscriminating as to time, place, or person, with some few exceptions. His daughter was one; and she shared the distinction with all men of superior rank to himself. Abel Bradfield was afraid of rank: he had never been accustomed to it. He was neither a public-school nor university man; and though he had been accustomed to wealth and talent, and had rubbed shoulders with many men and minds, he was afraid essentially of a well-born gentleman. Could he only have kept a small, the very smallest of Irish lords as his household god, he would have been temperate in all his sayings, and thoroughly subdued.

As he passed from his carriage to the drawing-room door, it was already manifest that something had gone wrong.

'The lamps never do burn here—everybody else can have his lamps bright enough. Whose business is it to see to the lamps?'

'The oil, sir, is newly come in, and—' began the footman, in the most obsequious of voices.

'D— the oil; whose business is it to see to the lamps?'

'Mine; and Williams, sir, looks after them.'

'You and Williams! Then you can go for your wages to Mr. Compton to-morrow. Where's your mistress?' and, without waiting for a reply, he walked straight to the drawing-room door.

'And so—' began Mr. Bradfield, in a tone of voice evidently meant for his wife; when seeing Ellen alone in the room, he immediately arrested himself, and said, 'My dear Ellen, is that you? What's become of your mother?'

'I heard the carriage—here's your tea, papa. I kept you a cup, as both mamma and Laurence have finished some time.'

The young lady raised one of the most beautiful faces possible as she said these words, and resumed her book, which had been inter-

rupted by her father's sudden entrance. He sat down on a sofa at some distance, and took up a periodical and a paper-knife.

'What time did Laurence arrive?' said he, after a few minutes' pause.

'Just after you started. He had been detained at his club on business, and could not get down to dinner.'

'What business could Laurence have at his club, when I wanted him here?'

'He might have a great deal, pa' dear; I believe he was with his friend Cartwright, who wanted an introduction to Laurence's publishers—he's bringing out a book on Poland. Another cup of tea, papa?'

All this was said in a distinct, measured tone, with a determination not to see that her father was annoyed, though no one was quicker than Ellen in detecting it. Like most women, she had a quick apprehension, and, like fewer, an excellent judgment in making the most of it.

'I wish he was less with his publishing friends than he is. His position in the county

ought to be of more importance to him than all the Poles put together. What the devil can it signify to us whether there's a Pole more or a Pole less in the world?'

'But, papa dear, I suppose it signifies whether the cruelties practised against them are a disgrace to a civilized era or not. Besides, they are people of higher intelligence than their masters, and it seems extraordinary that they should not have found friends enough to maintain their independence.'

'Higher intelligence ought to be able to maintain its own.'

'They might be of greater use to England than at present by a more extensive importation of our manufactures.'

Bradfield, indignant as he still felt, was beginning to soften under the influence of his daughter's imperturbability.

'You know, papa, Laurence has interested himself very much in the question. He has written an article or two on the subject in the "Continental Magazine," and holds some pecu-

liar views of his own about the freedom of Poland.'

'I should be curious to know what his views upon any subject are.'

'Well, he says Poland always has been governed by the women, and the women by the priests; and he says I ought to have been a Pole.'

'I don't see it,' said her father, who shut his periodical and looked at his daughter, who raised the handsomest blue eyes in England to his face as she replied,

'Because I manage everybody, and make them do as I like, excepting Mr. Scarsdale, the new Curate of Sommerton, and he manages me.'

This was said with an openness of brow and an evenness of expression which boded badly for Scarsdale, if he had the remotest ideas of anything beyond ordinary friendship; nevertheless her father's brow darkened at once. As he gloomily resumed his book, the door opened, and Laurence Bradfield entered the room. Ellen retired.

Perhaps no two persons, having any resemblance, were less alike than the father and the son. We have already described the father. Laurence was taller by two or three inches, almost gaunt in his proportions, having long limbs, a broad chest and shoulders, but a somewhat slouching gait. He had an appearance of having somewhat outgrown his proportions, not his strength, which was great. But it was rather the *vis inertiæ*, an unenergetic mass, which required something to set it in motion. Once impelled, it might not so easily be stopped. His face was the *beau idéal* of Saxon beauty; his complexion fair as a woman; his hair chesnut and uncurled; his forehead open and clear, marked with truth and intellect; his nose delicately formed; his mouth tolerably large, well-shaped, and with a short upper lip; remarkably good teeth; the delicacy of his complexion and features were atoned for by a firm, determined chin—the only feature which reminded us of his father's hard nature. It was a very peculiar face. It reflected a variety

of feelings, no passions. It was thoughtful, calm, yet full of humour and intelligence. Its habitual expression was contentment.

The father and son greeted one another, not cordially. On the one side was a shade of distrust — the good-humoured, confident smile gave way to a thoughtful look. Abel Bradfield shook his son by the hand, with an effort at conciliation as it seemed; half afraid of him, and rather deprecating a quarrel, yet not wholly able to restrain a sort of dislike.

'I am sorry I was not in time for your dinner-hour, but I was detained in town by an appointment.'

'So Ellen has told me. I have been engaged partly on your business this evening: there's plenty to do to-morrow down here.'

'So I understand, sir. I hope you've not overtasked your powers.'

'What do you mean, Laurence? The support promised us is sufficient to make even failure desirable in our case.'

'It has never occurred to me that failure in

anything is desirable. I have had some conversation in town, and since with my mother, on the subject.'

'It doesn't strike me as being of any sort of importance to your mother.'

'I take a different view of my obligations, my dear father; however that's neither here nor there.'

Saying which, Laurence Bradfield rose lazily, stretched out his hand to ring the bell, and ordered some seltzer water and the sherry.

'I neither know nor care what your sense of your obligations may be; the first you owe are to me and to the position I have made for you in this county. It's not to be kept without some sacrifice of self-indulgence.'

'If you had said self-respect, I should have said that no one should know that better than ourselves. But what's the use of quarrelling about such trifles, father? We'll talk it all over to-morrow. Good-night.'

'But I wish to talk it over to-night.'

Laurence sat down again. He listened with

apparent attention and good-humour to his father's account of what had been done, which he already knew; that he himself was to be the Whig candidate; that intelligence of these measures had been already forwarded to Saxonby through Mr. Darville; and that to-morrow an address was to be submitted to a committee, to which the name of Laurence Bradfield would be appended. He then took his candle, with a smile, in which there was a little defiance and a great deal of humour, and wished his father a 'Good-night' once more. On the landing he knocked at his sister's door.

'So, I hear, I'm to be Lord Crackborough's nominee. First step to the woolsack, Ellen.' And he retired to rest, with the same comfortable smile.

CHAPTER IV.

LORD MENTMORE.

'Well, honour is the subject of my story.'
SHAKESPEARE'S *Jul. Cæs.*

WHEN Abel Bradfield came down to breakfast the next morning, he came down alone; and, by the look of his face, he was excellent company for himself. Before long, however, he was joined by Ellen, and then by Mrs. Bradfield. When breakfast was nearly finished, Laurence Bradfield appeared.

'Ring the bell, Ellen.' Laurence did so.

'The carriage at eleven o'clock,' said Mr. Bradfield, senior; 'and Thomas,' added Mr. Bradfield, junior, 'tell Wilson to put the saddle on the old pony for me.'

'Yes, sir,' said the man after the most approved fashion, and retired.

'Where are you going? Surely I'm to have your company, Laurence, to Saxonby. Your address should be out to-day, or you'll have that fellow Carrington all over the county before you've started.'

'I am not going to oppose the Carringtons,' said his son, with as much good humour as if it was quite an affair of the most ordinary kind.

'I beg your pardon, but you are,' said his father, with a very dark brow.

'Indeed, I am not,' rejoined the other with a little more determination.

'You are pledged to do so, sir.'

'By whom, my dear father—by Lord Crackborough, or Mr. Packington?'

His father winced a little, and then said, 'By me, Laurence.'

'Your word is your bond, father, doubtless; but in this instance I cannot allow your obligation to bind me. There are plenty of reasons for this determination. I don't think with them; I don't care for them.'

'Not care for them? Lord Crackborough,

and the Honourable Louis Packington.' And between passion and surprise Abel Bradfield nearly choked himself.

'I'm sorry it should annoy you, but I do not intend to oppose Sir Michael Carrington in any way, directly or indirectly.' And, drinking off his tea, he rose from the table very deliberately and took himself to the stables. In half-an-hour he was in Saxonby in the lodgings of Mr. Scarsdale, the curate of Sommerton.

As Mr. Bradfield, senior, knew his son remarkably well, and was quite aware that remonstrance was thrown away upon him, he contented himself with abusing his wife, and discharging a servant or two; he also gave some orders relative to the cottages in the villages of Sommerton which inflicted hardships upon innocent people, and departed to concoct some fresh schemes for defeating the man whom he was unable to cajole.

'So, I hear we're to have no contest after all,' said Mr. Parrott, the chief saddler of Saxonby, about a week later, to his friend Mr.

Brand, the chief bookseller. 'I thought we was to have a bit o' life, John—we've waited for it long enough.'

'Yes! what with the coaches that are gone, and the trade that's carried away by the rail to Normanton, and the death of old Doctor Reardon, there's not much doing. As to the election, you know, my brother-in-law's one of the tenants at Sommerton, and he says as the old man wanted to start himself when Mr. Laurence refused, but the party wouldn't let him.'

'I shouldn't a voted for the old man, certainly not,' said Mr. Parrott; 'never set his foot in my shop but once, and then it was to blow up about something or other. The young gent's well enough, they say, and got a deal o' book learnin'; but you know best about that, Master Brand.'

'Ah! ah! he's a cleverish hand, I hear, one o' your great college men. Not that I've much opinion of them, myself. But they tell me he does all the good in the parish, and just manages to smooth the ways Squire Bradfield makes

rough. He must have a hard time of it, and plenty on his hands.' Here old Brand chuckled as if he'd said rather a good thing.

'There are a good many here would have given the young 'un a vote; they'd have divided between him and Sir Michael. We don't see much of Colonel Spence in this neighbourhood, and one likes to have a townsman, if possible. I wonder how old Darville manages between the two, he must have a rough time of it.'

'Darville does pretty much as he likes with Sir Michael, and I expect Mr. Bradfield can't get on without him. It's pretty certain they're not of the same way of thinking, though he is his agent. I've often thought there was a something or other that we don't know about.'

Here Mr. Brand looked very wisely out of the corner of one eye, and Mr. Parrott winked with the corresponding orbit at him, as much as to say, if I could be quite sure now—he hesitated a moment, however, and then asked an apparently irrelevant question.

'You're getting in years, Brand, and you

used to see a good deal o' the great folks about here when Saxonby was more of a place than it is now. I've heard say they used to come in formerly with their carriages and horses of a market-day, and stand about in your shop, and at Bates's, and talk over the counters, just for all the world as we do ourselves; now, do you recollect ever seeing old Sir Reginald Carrington, him as was killed on the road between Normanton and Spring Vale?'

'Oh! bless ye, yes; it ain't above thirty year ago. Fine handsome old gentleman he was. The present baronet was a tall handsome young fellow then. Ah! there was some queer stories afloat about Abel Bradfield's father and old Darville. There was a great lawsuit too about some missing papers; it was tried three times; but they couldn't make head or tail of it. They never caught the highwaymen, and the baronet was so shook he never got over it. Why that property of Sommerton must be worth twelve thousand a-year now, since they found iron and coal, and have taken to smelting and

so on. Every acre of it belonged to the Carringtons. There's something wrong surelie, but it'll never be set right now.'

At that moment, there turned the corner of the High Street a sight which was always welcome in Saxonby. It was a man in scarlet on a remarkably fine horse, who had returned from hunting rather early in the day. It was the beginning of the season, and he attracted more attention than usual. He came slowly towards the two townsmen, who both stared at him as he approached. Opposite to them he stopped, and said, 'Will you tell me which road out of the town I must take to get to Spring Vale?'

'Certainly, sir,' said Parrott; 'cross the Market Place, go down the hill past the Town Hall, and bear to the left—two miles will bring you to Sir Michael Carrington's lodge-gate.' Whilst he yet spoke, and as the gentleman was slightly raising his hat to thank the tradesman who had directed him, Scarsdale came down the door-steps of his lodging.

'Scarsdale!' said the stranger, smiling; and

it was a pleasant face to look at when it smiled.

'Mentmore!' said the other, somewhat surprised.

'My dear boy, what are you doing here? blacked, I see by your white neckcloth—but I thought you were to have had the good living of Broomfield; a family living, is it not?'

'Yes! but you forget that John Mucklestone has not yet killed himself with the York and Ainstey.'

'No! and never will; when men ride as he does, they take a great deal of killing. There are many good ones of your cloth, but he is the very best I ever have seen. I shall have to provide for you at last. Where are your quarters?'

'Here in the town. My cure is about two miles off, at Sommerton; but where have you been, Mentmore, and where are you going, *unde et quò?*'

'I've been with the ——shire. Had a very quick thing, lamed one horse, and am riding

the other over to Spring Vale. You know the Carringtons?'

'No! very slightly. I belong to the opposite faction.'

'What is the opposite faction?'

'Here it comes.'

'At that moment an open barouche, of the very best possible pattern, and only disfigured by too ornamental harness, and a pair of horses, if possible, a little too grand for a country market-town, pulled up with a jerk at the chemist's door, near which the two young men were talking. In the carriage was a quiet amiable-looking woman, of middle age; and by her side a lovely girl, with large clear hazel eyes, and a profusion of burnished gold about her brow and face, which invited criticism to defy it. Scarsdale raised his hat.

'What a lovely girl! I should like to belong to the opposite faction; but good-by. I'll come to see you to-morrow; you must know my friend Stafford Carrington, the best fellow in England—good-bye.'

'Who's that, Mr. Scarsdale?' said Ellen Bradfield.

'So he attracted even your attention, Miss Bradfield. He's a college friend of mine. A good man spoiled by fortune.'

'But who is he?'

'He has property near my father's.'

'A Yorkshire landowner, Mr. Scarsdale?'

'He is; and in various other places too,' rejoined the curate.

'And you know him intimately?'

'Very;' and still Scarsdale smiled good humouredly, as he parried her thrusts.

'And his name? come, tell me, Mr. Scarsdale.'

'Lord Mentmore; but good-bye, Miss Bradfield. I am very busy, and already late for an appointment.' In another minute he was gone.

The figure that gradually disappeared down the principal street of Saxonby was remarkable. Looking at him from behind, he was tall, upright, broad, and flat-shouldered; he sat on his horse with an ease, even at a foot's pace, which pro-

claimed to the initiated, the finished horseman. His whip hung loosely in his right hand, and his reins were held as loosely in his left, his knees were turned slightly outwards, and his length of limb in that attitude exhibited unusual power over his horse. Regarding him as Mr. Brand and Mr. Parrott had first seen him, he was a handsome man of about thirty years of age. He had an open sincerity in his deep grey eyes, which was unmistakable. No man could have doubted his truth, though he might have suspected his firmness of purpose, had he seen his mouth; at present it was covered by a thick, soft, light moustache. His features and the shape of his face, were characteristic of high blood; and a very close observer might have discovered an undercurrent of temper, rather quick than settled, in the constant play of his expression. He was never the same for many minutes; and from the gayest, the most childish simplicity he suddenly changed to austerity, to almost settled gloom. The horse he rode was quite sufficient to

stamp his taste in that particular. He was long, low for the man he carried, and would have been remarkable for his strength, but for the exhibition, in every action, of what is known as quality. He had long quarters, his tail was set on high, but his hocks were low, a little bent, and gave a freedom to every movement, which in his walk was as apparent as in the quicker paces of some horses. Had you or I been riding that horse, the chances are, that we should have escaped observation altogether: as it was, nobody could have looked at anything but the man. He carried his descent from the Plantagenets, in every feature and in every limb.

Physiognomy is said to be a doubtful science, —rather a speculation. I cannot think so. I scarcely believe in the existence of character without its external development. The deepest water is most moved by a transient ripple. When I detect anomalies in physiognomy, I believe in an error in judgment of my own; or, an oversight of some of those delicacies of detail,

which are the strongest indications to a professor of the science. It was only judged in this way, and subject to such scrutiny, that Lord Mentmore's face could have told a tale beyond the proclamation of present enjoyment of all things.

As he rode down the street, he was an object of speculation to more persons than one. Every shop window had its occupant, and many had their customers as well, who ran to the doors, examining a piece of broad cloth, a piece of lace, a ribbon, to have a look at the scarlet coat, and the handsome stranger. Messrs. Brand and Parrott watched him long, before they separated, wondering who he might be.

Scarsdale let him rest on the image of his brain, as a pleasing picture, which relieved him agreeably from troublesome fancies; and Ellen Bradfield mused long and wonderingly on the form of a man of whom she had heard much and often.

'A fine match indeed, my Lady Carrington, for that pretty daughter of yours. Is that the game? What a thing birth is, after all. Poor

papa! I've often laughed at his weakness. But it is more than money, laugh as we will. Laurence may live to think so; and here he comes.'

Laurence Bradfield was walking, and accepted a seat in the carriage, to go back with his mother and sister.

'Did you meet a man in scarlet, on a beautiful horse, as you came in from Sommerton?'

'No, I came the upper road.'

'Then he had turned towards Spring Vale before you got here?'

'Who was it, Ellen; anything interesting?'

'No one that we know, dear, though I certainly do feel interested; it was Lord Mentmore.'

'Mentmore, Lord Mentmore? are you sure; who told you? Where was he going?' and the young man seemed more interested than his sister.

'One at a time, dear; I am sure, and Mr. Scarsdale told me.'

'Scarsdale, how does he know him?'

'Neighbours and old college friends, the high priest of Sommerton says. And he is gone to Spring Vale Manor.' Laurence grew redder than usual, but the blush receded and left him pale enough. These signs were not unnoticed by the vigilant eyes of his sister.

'Did Scarsdale appear very intimate with him?'

'Well, for my chaplain, I think he did. You know brazen pots and earthen vessels ought not to float down quite the same channel.'

'I don't think Scarsdale considers himself an earthen pot.'

'Perhaps not; but he may be one for all that. But you know Lord Mentmore?'

'Yes, my dear Ellen, slightly.'

'And is he so very formidable a person as some seem to think?'

'Far from it. Personally a simpler or nobler fellow does not exist in England.'

'Is it his enormous wealth then, Laurence, which has made him the talk of the country and the Continent for the last ten years?'

'Certainly not that alone; and he has succeeded in reducing it to the dimensions of a very manageable income; but it is a combination of extraordinary qualities, which have made him the great person he is, and not the least to those who know nothing about him.'

'There is a Monte-Christo-like magnificence in some of his proceedings, which delights the vulgar,' said Ellen.

'The very last object he has in view. His magnificence is the spontaneous demonstration of his largeness of heart. He can neither think nor do anything small.' At this moment Mrs. Bradfield, who had been shopping in Saxonby, appeared at the carriage door, the steps fell, with an important noise; the coachman squared his elbows; the footman drew himself bolt upright; Mrs. Bradfield stepped in, the door closed with another bang, the footman touched his hat and mounted the box, and the gayest equipage, though not quite the best appointed in the county, drove out of the town.

The object of this universal interest was

meantime sauntering onwards to Spring Vale Manor. Whilst he goes on his way, we shall have an opportunity of saying who Lord Mentmore was.

Lord Mentmore was a man, at this time, of about thirty years of age. Without being exactly the richest peer in England, he had a sufficiency; say 60,000*l.* per annum, to have every requisite and some superfluities. He was the remaining scion of one of the highest families in this country, a descendant of a line of kings. He was remarkably handsome, accomplished, and of good natural abilities. He was also unmarried, which added another feather to his cap in the eyes of the women.

But a man might be all this, and more, and yet never have attained the extraordinary and peculiar species of popularity of Lord Mentmore. The universal influence which his name carried with it arose from impressions of a boundless magnificence in all he undertook. He took hounds. It is not enough to say that he did so at his own expense; but the grandeur

of the scale had never been equalled in the crack county of England. Never had such a stud in numbers or quality been got together. His house during the winter was full of guests. Those who had no horses were mounted as well and as liberally as himself, and on not rare occasions half-a-dozen second horsemen and twelve horses were provided for those who passed a week at Thrussington Park. He shot; and the slaughter in his covers, on his moors, and over his stubbles, was calculated by hundreds over that of his neighbours. He was the *bête noire* of the fine old sportsman who kept a brace of pointers, and the penny-a-liners of the sporting periodicals, who do the heavy business against the 'battues.' He took to racing, not as other men do, with a niggardly parsimonious spirit, which regarded its winnings or losings in a banker's book, but he kept a string of fifty horses in training, and gave 1,000 guineas for yearlings, whilst his competitors were wondering whether they might advance another twenty upon a previous five hundred. The

postboys who drove him to cover rejoiced in a guinea a-head per ride; and the old women and children who opened the gates were cognizant of nothing under shillings and half-crowns. He had a newspaper for the support and exposition of his party and their opinions; hospitals for his tenants; schools for his stable-boys; gardens and grounds for the recreation of a county; unbounded luxury for his friends; and a mutton chop and a glass of sherry for himself. For nine years he had resisted the blandishments of the bespangled dowagers, who sought him through thick and thin, though on more than one occasion their importunities had confined him to his dressing-room, and had once given him a scarlet fever. There are women whom the plague-spot itself would not shake from their purpose, when in pursuit of an undeniable *parti*.

In manner and appearance he was not so young as his years, the last of a school just passing away. He was courteous, chivalrous, and abhorred that questionable fastness and

roué-ism, the accompaniment of slang coats and zouave breeches. He never had an acquaintance, for they became involuntarily friends; and the poorer and more wanting in countenance and protection that friend might be, the more certain was he of obtaining them from the Earl of Mentmore. He was too secure of his own position to care for the reflected light of any number of satellites. This was the *nature* of the man; that circumstances had modified it we may well conceive.

The curate of Sommerton was a hard-working man and a gentleman. He was also a good parish priest. We do not mean that he had a particularly long frock coat, or very provincial-looking highlows. In fact, to confess the truth, he had a small spice of dandyism in him, and as some thought, wore much too good gloves and boots for a faithful shepherd. There are men who seem to think that the care of others necessarily implies neglect of self. Being, then, as we said, a hard-working man, some little time after this meeting, he was

asked to visit the union workhouse of Saxonby, for the reigning chaplain. The Saxonby Workhouse was about a mile out of town. It was remarkable for the neatness of its lawn and gravelled walks; and for the evident superiority of its spade-husbandry, which went on under the superintendence of the master, a former corporal of dragoons, in a fustian jacket, and by the combined exertions of a dozen middle-aged men in suits of yellow and grey. The building itself was a comfortable brick house, with a square imposing front, and a couple of less lively looking wings. Creepers grew over it in summer, and there seemed no desire to make a life of dependence more irksome than it necessarily must be.

Thither Mr. Scarsdale wended his way one fine morning in December. It was mild for the time of year, and there had not yet been any stoppage to the hunting.

'Fine morning, sir,' said the ex-corporal and master, saluting with a small cane he carried, as a symbol of authority, while he looked on at

the labours of the old men and young boys under his care. 'Rather expecting Mr. Lightfoot, sir; it's his morning.'

'I'm come in his place, Dalton; I hope I'm not late.'

'Not at all, sir. Here, Simmons, take the keys to the matron, have the chapel door opened, and the bell rung. Tell Sally that old Giles had better go into prayers. He's an old soldier, sir; been in foreign parts; and he's uncommonly bad; he don't take much notice of anything, but they like going to prayers, all of 'em, sir.'

'Glad to hear it, Dalton. It's a good sign.'

'Yes, it's a change for 'em; but old Morton says he'd like to see the minister to talk a bit; so perhaps you wouldn't mind stopping after the prayers are done; here, boys, in with ye.' Here they ascended the clean white steps and entered the building by the principal door.

Scarsdale walked into the chapel. On one side, against the wall, and in the angle formed

by the side and the end of the room, was a plain reading-desk, serving for purposes of prayer and exhortation, when, on Sunday, that was added to the ordinary service. A corresponding seat admitted the master and matron, schoolmistress and master, the latter of whom acted as clerk. In front of these latter stood the boys, and behind them the girls. A preternatural solemnity pervaded their countenances, as they had only just been detected in a scramble for a piece of sugar, which had been surreptitiously handed to them by one of the mothers. In front of the curate sat a body of old women, whose placid and resigned appearance seemed to say—'to this dreadful state of cleanliness and discipline we are all reduced, but we are bearing it, reverend sir, as you see, with great patience and fortitude.' The younger women, beyond, all played with the corners of their aprons, and smiled at one another as they saw a young face instead of the grey-haired old vicar, Mr. Lightfoot, to whom they were accustomed; and the old and young men at the back, two or three of

whom were in the last stage of helpless imbecility, lounged forward on their arms ready to pay just the amount of attention which should suit their humour. When a man has his bread, soup, potatoes, and meat weighed out to him, he soon becomes a machine.

Old Morton, as he was called, was a gigantic old man, apparently upwards of eighty years of age. He had thick matted white hair, and was bent nearly double. All signs of intelligence had left his face, and during the service he sat staring, with eyes void of speculation, at the clergyman. When they went back to their rooms, Scarsdale followed the old man, who had taken his seat on a bench, drawn close up to a blazing fire—such a fire as one may have in a coal country, without a grumble about poor's rates, even from a board of guardians. Otherwise the room was empty, and the curate sat down beside him.

'And who be you?' asked the old man, almost fiercely.

'The curate of Sommerton. The master said

you wanted to talk to me.' A gleam lit up the old man's face.

'Sommerton, Sommerton,' said he, as if the name had some charm for him, and he was trying to recollect something. One hand was paralyzed; and he kept it within his coat. 'I'm not long for this world, but I'd like to see Sommerton once more.'

'You know it then? But you seem to have suffered from a stroke, Morton?'

'Ay; I should know it; I went there once. There it is, always a running in my head. Sommerton it is, sure enough. There's a mister—a great man—what's his name?—the squire they call him. He's no squire, though. Sommerton, Sommerton, to be sure;—and what's his name?' and the old man pulled out his handkerchief and wiped the rheum from his eyes.

'Bradfield, do you mean?' said Scarsdale, more with the view of humouring him than anything else.

'Bradfield, Bradfield; that's the name. Som-

merton—yes; I have it; Abel Bradfield, Sommerton Hall, Esquire. Yes! yes! that's right enough. Now I have it.'

'I suppose you were acquainted with this neighbourhood, formerly?'

'Sommerton? to be sure,' repeated the old man, 'that was the place. Yes; I knew it well enough long afore that—long afore that—but never after it. Poor old gentleman! But I was away a many years; and one forgets after a matter of forty or fifty years. I suppose no one remembers after so many years?' And the old man looked half as if it were a question, half a soliloquy.

'That depends upon circumstances, Morton,' said Mr. Scarsdale; 'some make a great impression, others of no importance—'

'True, sir, true; so they do. But I've forgot a-most everything; everything but Sommerton and Mr. Bradfield. That's the name.' And here the old man rose from the form, and with the help of his stick walked along the room. He raised the latch of the door, and appeared

as if about to leave the room. Suddenly he returned, closing the door after him, and came up to where Scarsdale was standing. Bent as he now was with age and infirmity, Morton was nearly as tall as the curate; and it struck him at the moment that he might have been a man of great size and stature. He slowly drew his crippled hand from his breast and opened a paper. It was a large envelope of foolscap paper; and Scarsdale was surprised to see that the hand was not so helpless as was pretended. 'If you know Squire Bradfield'—he seemed to have got the name pat enough now—'ask him if he recollects Giles—Morton Giles; and come and tell me how he looks.'

'I don't think that will make much difference to him, my good man; besides, you must be thinking of his father.' And Scarsdale made a step towards the door, feeling rather embarrassed at the turn the conversation had taken.

'See; would you like to look at that, sir?' said he, showing the inner folds of the envelope. 'Then you shall see something—something as

'ill go agen him still;' and opening a paper, yellow with age, and scarcely holding together, he showed him the following words in ink, plain but brown with time, on a sheet of ordinary letter paper:—

'*May* 13, 18—.

'If Sir Reginald Carrington will do me the honour of coming to Patcham, on Wednesday, the 29th inst., I shall be happy to give the release, which is already prepared, on the receipt of Sir Reginald's cheque or note of hand for the balance of the mortgage.

'I have the honour to be, sir,

'Your obedient servant,

'Henry Bradfield.

'*To Sir Reginald Carrington, Bart.*'

Scarsdale read the paper as requested; and, not knowing what he had to do with the business, only returned it with much simplicity, saying at the same time—'You seem to attach some value to that letter, my friend.'

'Value?' said old Morton, with more energy

than he had yet spoken, 'it's an estate, sir, that's all. But good day, Mr. — Mr. — ah! — ah! Well, it don't much matter. Be sure you tell Mr. Bradfield about Morton Giles.'

As Scarsdale, after inscribing his name in the chaplain's book, and giving a summary of his duties at the union, prepared to descend the steps, he was arrested by the lowest of curtsies by the matron. She had a smiling, good-humoured face, and was the figure of a bustling, tidy woman, accustomed to the impudence and disorders of paupers, and not likely to be inconvenienced by them.

'And how do you find old Morton to-day, sir?' Here she smoothed her apron.

'He seems very well, Mrs. Dalton. Of course infirm, and has lost his memory; his faculties generally, to a certain extent.'

'Not so much as people give him credit for; he's sharp enough sometimes. I sometimes think he's playing a game.'

'Where does he come from?' said Scarsdale.

'Well, Claygate's his parish. He was a long

time out of England; but before he went abroad he didn't bear the best of characters, sir.'

'And what name does he go by here? for he has some curious story, as it seems to me, and calls himself Morton Giles.'

The matron stood the pumping remarkably well, and responded glibly,—

'In country parishes, you know, sir, they often go by two names; there are reasons you know, sir; and when he came in he was known as Giles, but his name on the parish books was Morton, after his mother. All his friends were gone from Claygate, and those who might have known him before pretended not to recollect anything about him, except his bad character; so here he is. He don't give much trouble, unless he gets hold of a gentleman like yourself to talk to. Mr. Lightfoot's a bit shy, and when he goes among 'em he always reads the Bible or the Prayer Book; but he don't ever talk to 'em or encourage 'em. To be sure, they don't many on 'em want it, as Dalton says, and he knows the world pretty well.'

When Scarsdale took his leave, he pondered over old Morton and his fancies for a quarter of an hour; but he had plenty to do and to think of, and the old man's message had escaped his memory before the end of the week. It returned to his mind some months after, when circumstances occurred which led to a reconsideration of the subject.

CHAPTER V.

THE MORNING'S RIDE.

'*Equam* memento rebus in arduis
Servare.' HOR., *Ode Parodied.*

'THE course of true love' does not often run 'smooth;' but why that proverbial asperity should be confined to what is true, we are unable to say. For our own part that eternal smoothness has but little charm; and the ripple which reflects sunshine and shade, bright gleams and darkening clouds, in love as in nature, gives brightness and variety to the prosiest poetry in the world. That slow, smooth stream appears to us always to hide more than it exhibits; there is a deepness and duplicity in its slowly-gurgling waters, which may conceal some hideous deformity which a more active current would have brought to the surface, or have tossed from its bosom for ever.

A determination to true love-making in this civilized world of ours, is a disease which is always subjected to the management of the pruning knife of papas and mammas, just as much as a determination of blood to the head belongs to the family physician. In good society it is under as much regulation and discipline as a Surrey volunteer; in the middle classes it is at least guided by rule, though the discretionary power is relaxed; in the lower classes, where it has found a freer vent, where women do not stipulate for pin money; nor men for little dinners once a fortnight, it has run such riot as to serve rather for a beacon and a warning, than an example to be followed.

No two persons ever came together, perhaps, with a more complete reticence on such a subject as marriage, and with a more perfect impression of what was expected of them as well-bred people, than Lord Mentmore and Evelyn Carrington. It was an understood thing that Lord Mentmore was to marry, as soon as an eligible person presented herself. He had never said

so himself, but, then everybody had said so for him; and it was quite impossible that an Earl, a Plantagenet, with large estates in half-a-score of counties, thould be allowed to go down to the grave unmarried. Had not the Duchess of Fixington declared it; had not the old Marchioness of Rougenoir predicted it; had not Lady Postobitville striven for it; and twenty-thousand mouths young and old watered for it. It was as well-known a fact, before fulfilment, as the frost of January 1, 1864.

In such a case as this, there were certain qualities, on the part of the bride, indispensable. She must be well born, well bred, moving in the highest society, of personal grace and beauty, according to taste; not his lordship's, but up to the standard of fashionable social life. She should be troubled with no incumbrances, which could bring discredit on her husband's position, in the way of peculiarities in herself or her connections. She should be not too clever; but she should be well versed in the moderate accomplishments of high society, and capable

of receiving with that dignity which would be of necessity a part and parcel of the Countess of Mentmore. She required no money, no ardent affections or aspirations, no ambitions beyond those of *haut ton*, no remarkable amount of courage, moral or physical, no self-denial, no wit, no genius, and only just so much brains as would suffice for the management of these large family mansions, and a London establishment. Such was the verdict of the world of fashion; and at the present moment, Evelyn Carrington was the culprit, found guilty of such capabilities for encompassing the match of the day.

'My dear duchess, so Mentmore is gone to the Carringtons'—dear clever creature that Lady Carrington; and it is quite time he was married and settled at last. They do say, indeed—'

'No such thing. You mean that stupid story about *La Gitana*. No truth in it, marchioness, believe me. My only objection to Evelyn Carrington is the want of money. They can't give her anything.'

'Mentmore want money? Oh! impossible. His racing pays, and you know he never plays or gambles in any other way. He cleared seventeen thousand last season, at least so Rougenoir tells me.'

'But his expenses are enormous. His living, his princely extravagances; he's been borrowing money for years; and all the Woollenborough property has been in the hands of Cater, the banker, for the last ten years.'

'Still it would be a great match for the girl; and as the Carringtons know nothing about his want of money, it does not take from the talent displayed by Lady Carrington,' said the Marchioness Rougenoir, who was not well affected towards that lady, having herself, in early life, cast her eyes on Sir Michael Carrington, when she saw but little prospect of a well-born pauper beauty attracting so large a gudgeon as the Marquis of Rougenoir.

'Let me put you right, marchioness. It was entirely Mentmore's own doing. He's very intimate with Stafford Carrington, and having

nothing better to do, is gone to the ——shire hounds for the beginning of the season. He has seen the girl, and has expressed an admiration of her; but, strange to say in this case, both mother and daughter are guiltless. She has all the qualities, except money, that his aunt, Lady Elizabeth, would like; and as he is as reckless of that, as he is impulsive in everything else, I presume it won't be long before we hear that it is all settled.' Shortly after the duchess took her leave.

Mentmore was not ignorant of what was expected of him; but he was one of those persons, not only capable of, but determined upon, judging for himself. It is probable that he would have been married before this, but for the desperate assaults of every seasonable belle that had come out; and although the charms of *La Gitana* had not been sufficient to bring about a secret marriage as some ladies averred, the impolitic struggles of matronly anxiety had driven him into *liaisons* which might be attended with awkward results.

Lord Mentmore's tastes led him but little into London society. When he went, he evidently regarded it as a duty rather than as a pleasure. His natural openness and simplicity revolted against the shams of which he perceived it to be in a great measure made up. His residence in Belgravia was usually as short as it could be with decency to his order and its requirements. Yet so remarkable was he in elegance of manner and in those external qualities and accomplishments of the world, that the most distinguished woman of the day had pronounced him, in these respects, perfect. His winter was spent in dispensing the hospitalities of the best hunting quarters in England, where a stud unrivalled in quantity and quality was ever at the service of himself and such of his guests as chose to avail themselves of his liberality. Newmarket and its attractions, which had now become a business, waited for him from the first spring meeting. A retreat to the most beautiful country-seat in England, and the affection and necessities of a thousand

dependants, claimed him for a short time after the Goodwood week. His various shootings in England and Scotland, his fisheries, and the healthy pursuits which have raised up and keep together an unrivalled class, called the country gentlemen of England, were in his eyes worth all the gilded *salons* and Apician feasts of the metropolis of this country or any other. The enthusiasm with which Lord Mentmore entered into all of these gave him only time for occasional visits to London, between the race meetings, or during the frost, if Thrussington were free from guests.

It was during one of these short sojourns that he happened to meet, at a small supper after the opera, a very attractive girl; attractive to him, indeed, from her perfect artlessness, and the evident indifference with which she found herself the object of his lordship's attentions during the evening. Having ascertained from his hostess that she was the sister of his friend Stafford Carrington, he took an early opportunity of being introduced to Lady Carrington

and Sir Michael; and no great difficulty presented itself to his wish to have a few days with the Saxonby hounds at the beginning of the next season. To say that such a visit was unimportant even to a person of Sir Michael Carrington's position is not true; and with the well-understood possibilities to her daughter, Lady Carrington, with all her good-breeding, may be forgiven for a very little additional excitement at the flattering proposal. Of all the country houses on his visiting list few held out equal attractions to Mentmore, exclusively of the daughter of the house. Without any costly extravagance, Sir Michael was one of those men who, from mere habit, had what they had of the very best. He could not afford to rival Abel Bradfield in the magnificence of his gilding, and the numbers of his servants; but the furniture was more comfortable, and the appointments of a higher class. The shooting at Spring Vale was limited in extent, but as good as could possibly be expected from the size of the covers. The stables and the equi-

pages were childish in comparison with those of Silvermere; but the ex-master of the Saxonby foxhounds was unsurpassed in the perfection of management, and no man in England vied with him in price for the few good horses which he selected for his son. He had ceased to ride, as he informed his friends, when he gave up the mastership; but it took a very good man to find his way over a country in front of the squire (a name he retained from early and untitled years) when he chose to go for a spurt on one of his jumping hacks. Great dinners and profusion were forbidden by a moderate income; but those who shared his hospitality were loud in their praises of the *cuisine*, and the company was rather select than numerous. Some wondered at his hold upon the county without a more frequent recurrence, or a more extended scale, of hospitality; but the good old families recollected what Sir Michael had been, and who he was, rather than what the member for the county might have given away.

The sun shone brightly in at the windows

of Spring Vale Manor one Thursday morning (there were no hounds on Thursday within reach), and Stafford Carrington lounged into the breakfast-room.

'What are you going to do with Lord Mentmore to-day, Stafford?' said Lady Carrington; 'there's no hunting, and he'll find it stupid, I'm afraid.'

'Mentmore never wants amusing in the country, I should think, mother; and if he does, we can shoot the two covers at the back of the home-farm. There's only about three hours' work, so we can begin at two o'clock, after luncheon. I suppose he's not down yet?'

'Not yet—he seems to be a tolerably early riser, however, and the most punctual man alive. A good example for you, Stafford.'

'Very—though I've never discovered that I stand in need of it; besides, he's late this morning, at all events. Why, Evelyn, where have you been to get such a colour?'

'Down to Aunt Philly's. We had some

business to do in the village, so I breakfasted with her an hour ago.'

'Have you seen Lord Mentmore?'

'That's scarcely probable, if he's not down yet. Stay! didn't he say something about killing a duck or a snipe before breakfast?'

'Yes; he talked of having the keeper out at seven o'clock, and going down to the farther end of the lake to look for a widgeon; but that's not very likely,' rejoined Stafford, who was inclined to judge of men's aptitude for rising by his own.

'I should think Lord Mentmore a very likely man to do anything he said he would,' said Evelyn, in a tone of voice which implied very little embarrassment, as it appeared to Lady Carrington.

At that moment Lord Mentmore walked into the room, and, after a comprehensive 'Good-morning,' and a friendly greeting from Lady Carrington, took his seat at her side.

'We were just talking about you, Mentmore, and my sister would have it you were gone

shooting with the keeper to look for wild-fowl.'

'I feel flattered by Miss Carrington's interest,' and Lord Mentmore's colour rose slightly as he said so; 'and what did you say on the subject?'

'Of course all that could be said—that you were in bed rather later than usual; whilst Lady Carrington held you up as a pattern of punctuality to me.'

'Miss Carrington was right; and I am obliged to Lady Carrington for her good opinion of me. I was shooting for two hours this morning, and have left three couple of snipe and a wild duck with your man for the larder. And what have you been doing, Carrington?'

'What you see—preparing for the labours of the coming day. There's a choice of evils: billiards, the library, Saxonby, a few pheasants behind the home farm, scarcely worth the walk, and a ride; Sir Michael's best hack is at your service.'

'You can scarcely have a better yourself,

Lord Mentmore; only pray arrange with Stafford what you would like to do.'

'I had an idea of walking, or riding, into Saxonby, Sir Michael; I have an old acquaintance living there I find. I know what Stafford means by the library; the lighest literature I could find was Hallam's "Middle Ages," with which he was preparing himself for magisterial duties or political life.' Lord Mentmore never wanted courage before to say what he wished; but he could no more have proposed that Evelyn Carrington should have accompanied them in a ride or walk than he could have proposed to walk away with the remains of the breakfast-table. It must be confessed that Lady Carrington herself saw no means of making any such proposition; she was in a similarly delicate situation. And the two persons concerned would not have come together that day until dinner-time, but for the opportune arrival of old Aunt Philly, who after some very discursive questions as to the occupations of the party, said, rather abruptly:

'My dear, you must go into Saxonby after lunch, and bring me out my afternoon correspondence; for I've no servant to spare, and I suppose your grooms have plenty to do; I dare say the gentlemen won't object to ride with you, unless they are otherwise engaged.' The opportunity was not lost on Lord Mentmore, who declared his anxiety to give up all or any of his acquaintance, and went so far as to say that Mr. Scarsdale was not likely to be at home, as his duties took him to his parish, wherever that might be. The only discontented person was Evelyn Carrington.

'That's a nice hack, Mentmore, he's by the Cure dam by Autocrat, just the size for a hack; my father's tall, but he never rides anything above fifteen hands;' and as Stafford Carrington spoke Lord Mentmore's groom brought up a neat brown horse, low and long, with the peculiarly well-ribbed up barrel of the Cure, and a quick active movement, which looked like carrying more weight than his size at first sight indicated.

In the meantime Evelyn Carrington was in the saddle. We have seen her there before, and we need hardly say that she had not diminished her attentions to her toilet in consideration of the company in which she was going to ride. The reader must not suppose that one *soupçon* of what is called love had yet affected her repose, or influenced any action of her life. She was singularly heart-whole as far as Lord Mentmore was concerned. It was impossible to be in his company long without liking him, but Evelyn had demonstrated the possibility of receiving even marked attentions from him without falling in love. For Lord Mentmore had been particular in his attentions during the week he had spent at Spring Vale, and had shown but a very faint reluctance to prolong his visit upon the invitation of Stafford Carrington. The two young men got on just as well as possible, not by mutual self-denial, which is the highest virtue in a small establishment, but by a recognized determination of self-indulgence, which is by far the pleasantest

mode in the houses of the great. Having all necessary appliances, they did exactly as they pleased, without reference the one to the other, and as hunting and shooting were occupations in which both delighted, and the rest of their time might be passed together, or apart in any room of the house, it was not unnatural that Mentmore should find Spring Vale Manor, and its agreeable society, more to his taste than Thrussington and its solitudes, which he had not yet interrupted this season by his usual invitations. They could stand over at all events. So he sent for more horses and helpers, and inspected the rest of the accommodation for his hunters to be found in the village. He declared it to be excellent; and as he seemed to think some sort of reason for remaining away from his own home was necessary to satisfy vague scruples, he praised the Saxonby country at the expense of his own, a partiality which was not shared in by others, who as frequently quitted the one for the other, for the opposite reason.

Lady Carrington was a clever woman, of a rather masculine understanding and manners, but she might be forgiven the nourishment of a sentiment common to all mothers, as she looked at two of the mounted figures from the library windows. And it was quite as well that she should take some forethought for her daughter's future, as neither Sir Michael nor Stafford ever cared or thought one iota about the business. They never doubted that Providence, or some unknown God, would do for Evelyn what had been done for all the other women of the Carrington family, and marry her, or kill her, at the proper time and in the most approved manner. As the figures retreated through the glades of the park, whilst a sickly November sun paled the bolls of the trees on either side, Stafford, who had remained behind to give some orders about his horses for to-morrow, cantered after them; and though he was quite as far-seeing as most people, and of a mind as active as in body he was indolent, he failed to see anything but a very handsome

man and a girl very good-looking for a sister, riding before him.

'Where are the hounds to-morrow, Stafford?'

'Four miles beyond Saxonby, and as this is very likely to be the afternoon draw, I must give orders about the earths. Evelyn, let's go round by the keeper's lodge, and into Saxonby by the other road.'

'With all my heart, it makes very little difference, and we shall have some turf for a canter,' replied the lady.

'Women are always for cantering. I suppose you never walked a horse to Saxonby and back in your life. Did you ever know a woman who was not unmerciful to her beast—at least as far as his legs and feet are concerned?'

'Miss Carrington showed a just discrimination, and, as soon as we get through the next gate, she ought to be indulged.'

'Oh! of course Mentmore says "no" to my "yes," while the lady is present; besides, having no sisters, he has not the experience I have.'

'Let me profit by yours then,' said the earl,

in the hope of having to defend his companion.

'Certainly. Having no idea of time, they are always in a hurry, and with such excellent legs and feet of their own, they cannot imagine the possibility of decay in their horses'. Their caresses bestowed on their four-footed favourites, are in proportion to their capability of endurance, and resemble the blandishments of newly-married wives, or of a schoolmaster to his favourite pupil; and they have a very general opinion that they are all light-weights.'

'The condition of Miss Carrington's horse disproves your criticism at all events,' said Lord Mentmore.

'You are just and generous, Lord Mentmore; Stafford is neither; and he would like to reduce our energies to a level with his own, I should say, to his want of that quality.'

'Do you know my friend Scarsdale, Stafford,' inquired Lord Mentmore of his friend, who, having given his orders at the keeper's cottage, again joined them.

'Scarsdale? we can hardly be said to know him. My father makes very few new acquaintances about here, and I am seldom here, excepting in the hunting season. Scarsdale is the curate of Sommerton, I believe, but my sister knows more of the neighbourhood and the clergy.'

'I know Mr. Scarsdale is a very hard-working person, and has a curacy which tries his talents to the uttermost. Sommerton has become a huge factory of late years. It was my grandfather's property, but now belongs to a Mr. Bradfield, who has found iron and covered the country with smelting furnaces, and a race of artisans in the place of our simple rustics, whom we love much better.'

'Bradfield? a tall fair man, a very clever fellow they say; I know him.' And here the groom galloped up and opened a gate into a hundred-acre grass field.

'Now for the promised canter, Miss Carrington,' and sitting down on his horse, and taking him lightly by the curb, and pressing him firmly, the colt by the Cure started as a horse does

start who comes out of such hands as those of Sir Michael Carrington. Miss Carrington followed at the same pace, while Stafford's 'whoay, gently, be quiet, stupid,' proclaimed the horse's intentions, but that his master was at that moment employed in lighting a cigar. This operation completed, he felt that for once he must break through his rule, though sorely against his will; he was with them in time to pass through the next gate as the groom held it open for the other two.

'I forgot whether you said you knew Bradfield, Miss Carrington?'

Miss Carrington drew down her veil, it was a November day, verging in fact on December, and said, 'You mean the young one, of course; I have met him once or twice. I was once for a week with him at Lady Sarah Elmsdale's.'

'He must have been at Christ Church with you, Carrington?'

'I believe he was,' said Stafford, listlessly, and affecting a comfortable indifference to such an epoch, though not many years past.

'He has a great reputation in town, with certain men; but I am very little there,' rejoined Lord Mentmore, who seemed bent on continuing the conversation at all hazards. 'What's he meant for? he's gone to the bar.'

'Politics, or the woolsack, of course. Having no natural position, excepting such as his money gives him, it is his business to make one.'

'No fool either; though about thirty thousand a-year takes a position by storm—'

'I've never tried it,' said Stafford, a little tartly.

'I have, and a devil of a deal of trouble it gives one too; what sort of a man was he at the University?'

'Slow and soft, I should think; but I didn't know him.'

'He wasn't slow and soft when I made his acquaintance,' replied the earl, sharply.

Miss Carrington pricked up her ears, and, still through her veil, ventured to ask how and when that was?

'I was at Tours in 184–. The place was full of English; bad style; and those who were not utter impostors were pretenders to high class; they all played *écarté* for five-franc pieces at the club, and dined at M. Roland's, a good *restaurant*, with a pretty wife. Foreigners are never very discriminating, and all the English who left a card at the palace, had the *entrée* to the Archbishop's parties at Tours.'

'The Archbishop's?'

'Yes; one of the duties of the French archi-episcopate is to keep society together, and to see to its *morale*. The Archbishop himself was a finished gentleman, polite to all men, especially benign to us heretics. But to continue this story. We were coming from a palace ball about two in the morning, when we saw flames issuing from a window in the Rue Royale, which did not seem as yet to have disturbed the slumbers or the philosophy of the French commandant, who lived there. The English are a practical people, and we soon woke the household to a sense of their danger. First one sort

of head-gear, then another sort, appeared at all the upper windows; then a cry of many voices; then the door opened and out rushed some of the lodgers, and in rushed the wind, and the flames went up to heaven again.'

'But what had Mr. Bradfield to do with all this?'

'You seem impatient, Miss Carrington,'—her veil was down all this time, but her face began to glow,—'but we shall come to him directly. One Englishman, called Kerr Beamish, or Beamish Kerr (I forget which), ran up the street calling out "*fou! fou! fou!*" with all his might, upon which a gendarme from the Hôtel de Ville suddenly appeared and threatened him, with a volley of *sacrés*, but seeing the smoke, happily brought some ladders and assistance, and helped to get the rest of the people out of the bedroom windows.'

'It seems to me, my dear Mentmore, that your friend Bradfield is becoming slower than ever.' This time it was Stafford who spoke.

'Wait a minute. We can understand a lady's impatience, but yours is quite a new feature;' and then he resumed:—'While we were standing looking at the flames, and imagining that everybody was safe, and that what remained to be burnt was but of little consequence, a voice, increasing somehow or other till it got to us, ran through the crowd, to the effect that a baby or two was left behind in a certain room, indicated by the finger of the mother, as I suppose. Ah! Miss Carrington, that mother's finger was a terrible index, and Bradfield thought it so. It wanted some courage to scale the ladder that still rested against the wall; and while I hesitated I saw a fine, broad-shouldered, light-haired young Saxon step out from the gleams of the firelight, and mount. He was scarcely a minute gone, when he reappeared with the object of their search. The mother met him on the ladder, and returned with the child, but without a thought for her preserver.'

'Horrible! how unnatural.'

'No, Miss Carrington, wrong again; natural, but inconsiderate. By some inexplicable mistake, as the mother put her foot to the ground, the ladder was removed; and in the crowd of congratulations, for a moment—only a moment—the hero of the scene was forgotten. He appeared at the window, and seeing the ladder gone, and the impossibility of remaining longer, he jumped from the room; an ineffectual attempt of a small Frenchman to catch him, resulted in a severe fall for both of them, and the man was picked up with one of the worst dislocations of the foot that can well be conceived.' Here Lord Mentmore stopped.

'But how came you to know him, beyond your casual meeting?'

'Ah! I forgot. The French papers kindly attributed the fire to the smoking in bed of a young Englishman, who was carousing there, and who had met with a severe accident in leaping out to save his life. It was necessary to correct this misstatement, and having called upon him, and having some influence with the

consul and the authorities, I insisted upon a contradiction and an *amende*.'

'And were you successful?'

'He was henceforth known as "le vertueux citoyen," and his accident and my leisure made us companious for some months. If he lives near you, I should like to see him.'

'The village is two miles and a-half across the fields, and the hounds meet there next week, on Monday, I think. You'll have an opportunity of seeing Mr. Bradfield then, unless you prefer calling beforehand.'

The universal panacea for all ills is a gallop. We prefer it with hounds; but there are men who, physically or constitutionally, are unable to enjoy it in that form. Therefore we say whatever your ailment—loss of money or health, a runaway bailiff, a bilious headache, a dyspeptic wife, or a disappointment in love, seek your remedy in the saddle. Desert the roads; there you will be reminded only of your ills by every specimen of miserable humanity you meet. The painted old dowager in her gilded chariot

proclaims vanity and vexation of spirit; the weary pedestrian, the laborious artisan, the waggon load of coals, or the huxter's donkey, send you back to your domestic grievances. Trotting on a turnpike road may shake your material liver, but it does nothing to exalt your ideas or to take you out of yourself. But turn in at the first bridle gate, select a line of grass fields and practicable fences for your essay, and, if you do not come to grief, you will return a wiser and a happier man. There you sit, with your reins lengthened on each side, just feeling your horse with the curb, as he arches his neck and puts his head into place; shorten your stride for ridge and furrow, and when you get upon the headland let him move, and move with him. I dare say it may be vanity, self-applause at the beauty of the performance (for there is no more beautiful performance in the world); we do not stop to analyze motives; but there you sit, the true representative of the Epicurean. Oh! how the heart bounds, and fancy wings her way far from this dull world,

and freedom frets herself upon her rightful throne. We have heard of our native heather; nay! we have been on it; but give us a hundred-acre pasture, with the slightest possible risk of a fall in getting out of it, and we commend the exertions of the pedestrian, without, however, following his example, 'Non cuivis homini,' &c., &c.; but now you know why I should like to live in Northamptonshire.

When Lord Mentmore, Evelyn Carrington, and her brother reached Saxonby, two of the party were radiant with happiness and beauty, and the third was on the verge of animation in spite of himself.

CHAPTER VI.

A PARVENUE BEAUTY.

'Youre two eyn will sle me sodenly;
I may the beaute of them not sustene,
So windeth it thorowout my herte kene.'

CHAUCER.

'WILLIAM,' said Stafford Carrington to the groom, as they turned up towards the post-office of the sporting little town. 'Get the second-post letters, and follow Lord Mentmore and Miss Carrington. Mentmore, I'll be with you in five minutes, I see Dillon's horse at the Town Hall, and I want to speak to him, it will save me the trouble of writing. Keep straight along the Sommerton Road till you come to the village, and my sister will show you the way back over the fields; but I shall catch you before that, unless you're going along the road as you come through the last three fields.'

Mentmore and his companion, thus directed, turned short round to the left, without going into the town, and proceeded slowly, almost listlessly for the time of the year, along the road indicated to them. Their horses played with the bits, and occasionally broke from a walk, as a market cart rattled past them; but they were straightway pulled up again; and slowly as they proceeded, neither seemed much inclined to talk. They had been voluble enough in the fields, while Stafford was with them; surely his absence had not thrown a damp on their spirits. The removal of a wet blanket should be immediately followed by a rise in the temperature.

The fact is, that Lord Mentmore began to think: a process, with him, wholly inconsistent with lively conversation. As he looked at Evelyn Carrington, who had again raised her veil, and whose glowing colour now owed nothing to anything but nature and exercise, he thought he had never seen so pretty a girl. She was far from a beauty; very far from his style of beauty. There was but little regularity

in her features, and they required perhaps to be set in motion to give them their peculiar charm. But there was a great simplicity and truth about her whole carriage, which charmed his imagination, and disarmed his suspicions. The great fault of Mentmore's character, was the liability to suspect motives in everyone. His education, and the external circumstances of his position, had created this infirmity, from which his nature was eminently free. He was beginning to fancy himself very much in love. It was a curious contradiction in his character, that, without any diffidence, he never gave himself credit for creating impressions by what he was, always by what he had. He had fancied himself in love before this; but was always awakened from his dream, by a supposed detection of some hidden design. He might have been well and happily married, but for this inconsistency. Women as a rule, are the least calculating creatures in existence. There are some, spoilt by too old an education, or made prematurely hard and bright by constant friction with the world (rapid conductors

and non-absorbers), who will sacrifice every charm of youth, and every sentiment of affection, on the shrine of ambition or selfish indulgence; but these cases are exceptional. Women are by nature self-sacrificing, true, impulsive: 'varium et mutabile' if you will; but not thoughtful, considerate, 'tenaces propositi,' or self-seeking. Lord Mentmore had not found them so; but he had been rendered suspicious by a case or two, unconnected with matrimony, and now he looked at them through his own glass—darkly.

Whilst he was turning over in his mind his present prospect of happiness, and the possibility of another indiscretion, the thoughts of Evelyn Carrington were directed in the same way. Women are quick of perception, especially where they are themselves concerned, and she almost divined his feelings towards herself. This might have had some effect upon her, for she was really wondering how little she was attracted by himself, his coronet, his wealth, or his grudgingly-offered affection. Personally she liked him: his good-nature, his good-

temper, his simplicity, and his princely liberality. All this was in accordance with the traditions of a half-ruined house, in which she had been brought up. She was plotting at that time a means by which she might prevent a too hasty explosion on his part, for his attentions could not be mistaken by herself. Her instinct told her what a candid avowal she had to expect, if he learnt to know her as she was. She was anxious only to prevent disappointment, to him, to her mother, and to Stafford.

She almost hoped he might fancy some symptoms of his *bête noire* in her; and thus save her the trouble of inflicting pain. Yet his good opinion was too valuable to lose, and her own reputation for sincerity, too dear for the sincere encouragement of such a wish. Some other means must be tried, unless she was so fortunate as to fall in love with Lord Mentmore.

This has taken some minutes to write; it took but a few seconds to design, to investigate, to analyze.

The road on which they were now riding is a narrow road. On the left is an elevated foot-path near the town, which merges within a few hundred yards into shapeless mud, and soon ceases altogether. Heaps of stones ready for repairs, and manifestly an allotted task for the able-bodied pauper, line the opposite side; sloping fields of great extent, separated by large bull-fences, extend in endless succession parallel with the road. Its normal condition is twofold: soft yellow stones, half broken, or deep coal-cart ruts of unfathomable mud. Squire Bradfield's iron and coal carts render abortive the attempts of road surveyors and able-bodied paupers alike.

When the morning has been devoted to billiards, books, the bailiff, household cares, and the demands of a parish or a property, custom sanctions a ride, a drive, or a walk, as the occupation of the afternoon. The Bradfields were not different from their neighbours in this respect. When he was not seeing his lawyer, or quarrelling with his

tenants, or electioneering, or toadying, or doing something to further his own interests at the expense of other people, Mr. Bradfield accompanied his wife or his daughter for a drive. He was fond of exhibiting himself in state behind his handsome carriage horses, and of fancying he heard a delighted populace shout, 'Long live Bradfield the wealthy.' On the present occasion he was engaged in giving instructions for a lawsuit, in which he was involved for robbing the public of a piece of road, which completed an angle of his park as he wished it to be completed: so his daughter's carriage came to the door alone, about the time that Lord Mentmore and Miss Carrington were leaving Saxonby behind them.

It was her father's last present to her; and was worthy, almost worthy, the beautiful recipient of his bounty. The carriage was all that Long Acre could do in the way of building: beautifully got up, long, low, substantially put together, but having an appearance of lightness, which it owed really to the elegance of

its shape. The ponies, which now pawed impatiently for their mistress's hand, were the best movers in London, and had been rescued from the creditors of a nobleman of remarkable taste by the offer of such a sum as made John Anderson himself open his eyes. When Abel Bradfield meant to be munificent, and it was not often, he could afford to be so; and his daughter's birthday was a great occasion. They had been driven two or three times and approved of. They now waited for Ellen Bradfield at the terrace steps of Sommerton Hall.

'Ellen, are you going to drive those ponies to-day or to-morrow?' inquired her brother, who was cutting the leaves of a new French pamphlet, 'Sur l'Evangile,' which had made a great noise among the theological critics of the day.

'To-day, of course; and are you going with me, sir?'

'No, thank you: M. d'—— is more amusing than even Saxonby itself; but you'd better go

at once, for that bay pony has been on his hind legs for the last ten minutes, and seems inclined to stop there altogether.'

With this he walked down the steps to help her into her carriage. What he had said was nearly true. Good keep and little work had improved their condition, but not their manners, and both exhibited considerable impatience to be off. The small boy, who seemed to have been bought with the rest of the equipage, was more ornamental than efficient: but Ellen Bradfield never wanted courage, and that natural virtue on her part was now strengthened by ignorance. She sat down behind them with the *aplomb* of the Queen's state coachman on a birthday.

'They look fresh, Ellen: are you sure you can drive them?'

The banter on his lips convinced her that he had no fears for her, so she answered only by taking the reins, and letting them go. A succession of bounds carried them along the drive towards the lodge gate; she was scarcely

willing to allow that she felt some degree of pleasure in seeing it open. The boy behind was becoming more alive to the danger, when on turning into the road the bay pony aforesaid gave a very unmistakable kick, which however did not break the splashboard, and which was, therefore, not regarded by his mistress as any symptom of unusual violence. Bad manners in horses are just as contagious as in the human subject. It was quite impossible for Perrot to see Dundreary (so called from the beauty of his mane) disporting himself in this eccentric manner, without joining in the amusement. Before long he began to jump too. Ellen Bradfield was a determined person, and had no idea of asking for assistance until *in extremis*, added to which she had not thought of requiring the services of her useless little boy in any such capacity. Her efforts to restrain her horses had already tired her wrists, and she had not yet gone a third of the way. The road itself was a succession of short hills, so that the ascent, which might have been a

safety-valve to their exertions, was more than counterbalanced by the descents immediately following. They had as much idea of settling as Colonel Waugh himself. Still she managed to hold them; and was determined to call, in Saxonby, upon her friend Mr. Scarsdale to go back with her, as a necessary precaution against accident.

At this very moment one of those unfortunate *contre-temps* happened, which are common enough in everybody's experience. A cottage door, immediately on the road, suddenly opened, and a woman did what she had been in the habit of doing for the last thirty years; she threw a bucket of dirty water into the road without looking. For thirty years it had been done with no other result than that of making a puddle or increasing the mud. Upon the present occasion the consequences were somewhat different, as we shall see.

'Miss Carrington, what's that?' said Lord Mentmore, using his glass at the same time.

They were about descending a long hill, and looked straight towards an opposite eminence of the same kind at half-a-mile distance. The dip of the hill lay between them.

'What's that?'

'It's a carriage and pair, Lord Mentmore,' replied the lady, not using a glass, 'and, good heavens! it's running away; there's some one in it—a lady—alone!'

As she spoke it was easy to see the carriage rock from side to side; now over a heap of stones; again into the road towards the path, as the occupant endeavoured with all her strength to keep her horses straight.

Lord Mentmore beckoned to the groom; and descending lower down the hill jumped off his horse.

'Up on the footpath, Miss Carrington; quick. Nothing can be done till she reaches the bottom of the hill. Here, take my horse.'

The pace the ponies were coming gave but little time for preparation; and Lord Mentmore was only just ready for action, as they dashed

up the hill with almost undiminished speed. Placing himself in readiness as they neared the spot at which he stood, he ran by the side of the off horse for three or four strides, and turning him suddenly with all his great strength (for without being a giant he was a man of great power and activity, which his country life had confirmed), he brought the whole concern to a stand-still amidst a heap of stones, on the deepest and muddiest road-side he had yet seen. The heads of the ponies were brought to bay in a thick bullfinch, and in another second Miss Carrington and the groom were by his side.

The ponies had had their gallop, and though they were not by any means beat, they seemed satisfied to stand still while Miss Bradfield stepped out of her pony-chair on to the driest stone she could find. She did not faint; and, with the number of horses and paucity of hands, it may be considered fortunate that she did nothing to add to the perplexity. Her beautiful features were, however, as pale as

death; and it was quite clear that she could not take the ponies back in her present state. They presented a curious group to anyone coming over the hill, did these five persons; for by this time the little groom had joined them, having been disposed of, as he says, at a heap of stones: the supposition being that he jumped out. Lord Mentmore stood by the ponies, unwilling to leave them; Miss Carrington sat on her horse, having first introduced herself and then Lord Mentmore; William busied himself in looking over the carriage to detect flaws in that or the harness, having surrendered the horses to the little groom, who was otherwise useless; while Ellen Bradfield sat herself down on a heap of stones, and, though her hands shook and her limbs trembled, and her lips had not yet regained their colour, thanked her deliverers, and detailed the causes of the accident with as much presence of mind as though she had been once more in her own drawing-room. The next question was how to get her there.

'Here comes Stafford, Miss Carrington;' and at that moment he appeared coming over the hill, with his reins hanging on his horse's neck; nor did the unwonted group much disturb his equanimity. He continued his descent at the same pace. Not so a pedestrian who came over the brow at the same time: he no sooner saw the pony-chair, and the groom, and the unusual concatenation of circumstances, than his walk became a trot, which shortly ended in a run—a fair reason for a little apparent indecision in demanding the cause of the catastrophe.

Scarsdale, for it was he, was what one of the best writers of the day is pleased to call a muscular Christian; not, as we heard it explained from the pulpit by an extemporaneous cushion-thumper, a mixture of piety and strong exercise, the soul of a Spurgeon in the body of a Tom Sayers, but a practical parson, who believed his vocation to be that of doing good to everybody, under all circumstances, in the way most likely to be efficient for the end proposed.

He occasionally visited his people in health as well as in sickness. He did not always call upon the old women of Sommerton with the 'Visitation for the Sick' under his arm. He threw in many a word of comfort to the labourer in the field, whom he could not have hoped to catch in his cottage. He interested the souls of his flock not unfrequently through their bodies; and occasionally seemed to have no other purpose in his little visits than to inquire after the wellbeing of the pig. He had succeeded a very spiritually-minded young man, with a frock-coat down to his ankles, and a word of advice to everybody, which he never varied. He was always 'in season,' like the ratcatcher's dog, whenever rats were to be met with. Yet, strange to say, the poor of Sommerton preferred John Scarsdale to his predecessor; and that was quite enough to make Abel Bradfield hate him.

This brotherly sentiment was not shared by either his daughter or his son. They liked John Scarsdale, and admired his practical sense

and honesty of character, as did everyone who knew him. There was a little dilemma as to how Miss Bradfield should be sent back to Sommerton. Lord Mentmore offered his services, simply, kindly, not warmly; for, though he could not but feel admiration for the lovely face before him, and sympathy for her accident, he felt more strongly that his duties and his inclination belonged to Evelyn Carrington. She, on the contrary, begged him not to think of her, and not to trust Miss Bradfield to the capacity of any groom. The lady herself, who was rapidly recovering, was firm in her refusal of assistance, and was about submitting to a compromise, that the Spring Vale servant should be spared as her charioteer, and that her own 'incapable' should be trusted with Mr. Carrington's hack—a service of which his reviving colour seemed to render him capable. The arrival of John Scarsdale, however, put all to rights.

'Oh! Mr. Scarsdale, you were going to your parish, I'm sure; pray let me take you, or do

you take me back; that will save Lord Mentmore and Miss Carrington's servant all further trouble.'

Scarsdale's face glowed with delight, as he replied to this request. But Scarsdale was young; as if he cherished any feeling beyond that of the purest friendship, he was wrong.

'And I'm sure my friend Scarsdale is quite as able as I, or anyone else, to take you home in safety,' said Lord Mentmore, shaking hands with him the meanwhile, and raising his hat to Miss Bradfield, whom he now assisted to take the left-hand seat in the phaeton, while Scarsdale gathered up the reins, ready for the drive.

'Mentmore, be so good as to let your man take up that off pony's curb a link or two, and put the near-side rein of the other down to the bottom bar.'

Lord Mentmore beckoned to William, who did as Scarsdale had suggested, the little tiger climbed into his seat behind, and with renewed thanks Miss Bradfield was once more on her road home.

'And who the devil is that?' said Mr. Carrington, as they once more got into marching order.

'That's Miss Bradfield, Stafford; you must have seen her before.'

'Never, certainly—that's not a face to forget. You said there were no such things as modern Valerias. You didn't believe in them in connection with Turkey carpets and civilization. That's a Valeria of modern life.'

'*A propos*—?'

'Of Whyte Melville's book, "The Gladiators." That's a Valeria in character; colouring of the school of Correggio.'

'What do you see in her? It must be something distinctive to have attracted such marked notice from your fastidious brother, Miss Carrington.

'Hair of yellow gold,' said he, almost to himself, meditatively at least, 'dark eyes and lashes, on a tint of snow; an upper lip short and arched; passion and self-respect; a chin,

handsome, but somewhat square; power for good or evil.'

'Why not for good alone?' asked Evelyn.

'Because that's impossible.'

'What is there no goodness with power, Stafford?'

'Yes; but accidentally.'

'Then pray give her the benefit of the doubt,' said Mentmore, 'beauty is generally allied with goodness, and a more lovely face than that it would be difficult to see.'

He spoke warmly, and Miss Carrington endorsed all he said.

'Power inclines to evil,' retorted Stafford, 'that face has as much power as beauty. The weak give up their vices as impracticable, and take to respectability as a *pis aller*.'

'You're becoming cynical, Stafford; come, you're too young for that at all events.'

'No; it is true, whatever you may think. Had she lived with my mother she might have been good and certainly great; what can happen with the grasping

avarice, and vulgar tyranny by which she is surrounded?'

'What's the matter with Bradfield *père?*'

'Nothing particular; he's a tyrant, and a toady, a pretender, and a miser, in one breath; and is suspected of half-a-dozen rascalities that would have hung poorer men;' and here Stafford Carrington relapsed into silence, and began to whistle.

The fact is, that during the few moments he was present, he had just found time to admire the wonderful beauty he had seen before him. After once raising his hat, as a mere distant act of politeness, he had suffered himself to gaze his fill at a loveliness, which struck him as the more extraordinary, when he heard who she was. His mind was peculiarly formed to appreciate extraordinary physical beauty, and to pass by what was commonplace. Though his prejudices were great, his admiration was so intense, that he felt bound to justify himself by the immediate adoption of maxims by no means just. Hence his philosophical analysis

of a beauty which he had but partially inspected.

'And who was that fellow that so coolly took his seat and the reins by her side?' asked he, after a sufficient pause which no one seemed anxious to break.

'That was my friend, Scarsdale,' replied Lord Mentmore.

'Oh! that was Scarsdale—free and easy?'

'Not remarkably so. I intend to give that fellow a good living; he's a good, practical, hard-working parish priest, a character I much admire.'

'He won't stand in need of assistance to get through life, if assurance will do it for him.' Why he had fallen foul of Scarsdale it was difficult to say.

'Why! Stafford—what's the matter? that's the first time I ever knew you with energy enough to abuse even your enemies; and I suppose you never saw Mr. Scarsdale till to-day.'

Miss Carrington pulled her horse up as she

spoke, and the groom held open a bridle-gate to the left, leading into a large ridge and furrow field.

'This way, Lord Mentmore.' And he passed through the gate after her.

'I didn't mean to abuse Mr. Scarsdale; I dare say he's a good fellow enough, but if he looks closely after his principal female parishioner, he may certainly manage to exist without Mentmore's promised living.'

'Is that Sommerton, Stafford.'

'Yes! that's Sommerton; what do you think of it?'

'It's all wall—it looks like money to judge by the bricks and mortar round it. If John Scarsdale has an eye to the heiress, he'd better provide himself with a rope ladder. Mr. Bradfield seems to be an exceedingly *in*clusive person.'

Here Miss Carrington took hold of her horse, and the party quickened their pace; the day was beginning to fail.

The cottages at Sommerton looked like

money, as well as the park wall. Everything has its advantages; and that egotistical 'my' which was the leading feature of Abel Bradfield's mind resulted in strong, well-built, well-ventilated, and well-drained cottages for the labourers in his vineyard, and for which he made them pay. Still there they were, unpicturesque truly; but air-tight and water-tight, and not to be met with elsewhere. They had too the Bradfield mark all over them, 'A. B., 18—;' and like everything round him, excepting only the atmosphere itself, proclaimed aloud: 'I, Abel Bradfield, although a manufacturer and a parvenu, can do more than all the Carringtons and their neighbours put together.'

We will go into one of these cottages, an hour or two later than the time at which the Carringtons and Lord Mentmore had quitted the village. It was clean and tidy, but meanly furnished. Four chairs, a round table, a cradle on which had been lavished all the art and extravagance of a poor mother's love. Scraps

of coloured gauze and ribbons were the first objects which met the eye of a casual observer. On the mantelpiece there, was the usual assortment of tins, dredgers, and saucepans, mingling in an inconsistent familiarity with a sixpenny's worth of porcelain shepherdesses and lambs, and the commonest representation of Carlo Dolce's Salvator Mundi. Above them was a sampler, hanging upon the wall, which purported to be the work of Ann Mason, of the Spring Vale School. The only other article of furniture was a good-looking clock, too good indeed for the rest of the decorations. There were cupboards, as in all the cottages in Sommerton, on both sides of the fireplace; and the room was fitted with pegs and other conveniences, which were evidently made use of. We are particular in describing these things, as they bespeak the character of the delicate, pretty young woman who occupied one of the chairs. She was working at some coarse sort of sewing, resembling a labourer's shirt; her foot was rocking the cradle before mentioned; and on

the small piece of carpet before the fire were playing two children, which might have been of the respective ages of three and five years. They were handsome black-eyed youngsters, clothed not in rags but with many patches, less dirty however than the ordinary run of such children, and at present quiet by the intervention of a thick slice of bread. When children know nothing of butter, it is astonishing how palatable the unadulterated material may be made to appear. The day was long gone, but the mother worked on by the single rushlight in the room, aided by a cheerful coal fire, which threw its flickering glare on the objects around.

Mrs. Job Fletcher was manifestly poor, but she was a tidy woman, better than common, and usually putting a good face upon difficulties. That was evident. She had been better off, and in better houses; the cradle spoke out. She had or had had friends; that was the clock's chime; and she had a husband who was either very hard worked or fond of his beer; his absence from her side proclaimed it aloud.

But nothing else, or rather nobody living dared have said so in Mrs. Fletcher's hearing.

There is a step outside, and one of the little ones lifted its brown curls and said, 'Daddy.' The mother put down her work, trimmed her candle with the point of her needle, and unbolted the door.

An athletic-looking fellow, with dark eyes and dark hair, in the dress of a labourer, but somewhat affecting that of a gamekeeper, by his brown velveteen jacket, stood on the threshold.

'Well, mother,' said he, shaking the ashes from his pipe, and placing it carefully on the mantelpiece; 'how goes it? young 'uns not in bed yet? Master Tom, what be you about?' The woman looked up at him, and without replying took his rough hand in hers; there was a great contrast between the two. Her face expressed the smallest possible shade of reproach. He saw it in a moment, and said, 'Come, Nanny, I ain't been long. It's not late, and I been put out above a bit, I can tell 'e.'

'What was it, Job; something about the club money? We'll make it all right next pay-day. Miss Ellen's very kind at bottom, though she does make believe sometimes.'

'No, Nanny, it's not about the club money. Though there ain't much charity if they don't convenience us sometimes when we're behind-hand. It's all along o' that young parson of ourn.'

'I thought you liked Mr. Scarsdale, Job; I'm sure he's very kind to us, and always takes such notice o' the children.'

'Ah! that's all very well; but he's been on again about them pheasants; he says it's the same thing as takin' fowls or money. Says as the squire feeds 'em, and pays for 'em, and consequently they be his'n. I can't see it in that way nohow.' Here he sat himself down again and began to refill his pipe.

'Well, if he thinks so, you know, Job, God knows all about it, and perhaps Mr. Scarsdale's right.'

'That's like you, Nanny, always for the

parson. And then he went on uncommon about Dan Morton; and threatens to tell the squire, or Jennyngs, if we don't give it up. Says he hears on it everywhere, and it's his duty.'

'And if it is, Job—' said the woman, placing her hand on her husband's arm.

'What! his duty to get you and your little 'uns turned out of the cottage? No, no, that won't do. He wants to make friends with the squire, that's all; wants to marry Miss Ellen belike, and have Sommerton for hisself.'

'Nonsense, how should you know?'

'How should I know? Oh, I knows a good deal more than folks thinks for. Wasn't he drivin' with Miss Ellen this arternoon? Besides, didn't Morton tell me all about it.'

'Morton's always got something to say. I can't think what he finds to talk about. He's got the best cottage in the parish, and Mr. Jennyngs is often doing him one good turn or another. I'm sure I wish he'd been further first before he came to work on the farm.

Why didn't he stick to the ironworks in Lower Sommerton.'

'I know he's a wildish chap, Nanny, but there ain't much harm in him. He knows what he's about; the squire won't make an enemy of him.'

'He didn't bear the best of characters in Claygate, and he isn't any good to us, I'm sure;' and Nanny Fletcher brought a good honest sigh from the bottom of her breast.

'Dang it, lass, what are you got again? Dan Morton? We shouldn't a had last night's supper, if it hadn't been for him; and what's thee got to-night? I'm right clammed with the fog.'

Nanny did not answer at first. She looked up with a sorrowful expression of face, and then nodded towards the cupboard on the right hand side of the fireplace. Then she took up her baby out of the cradle, and taking the candle from the table went slowly to the door which led to the staircase, and went upstairs. Her foot was heavy for one so young and light as she.

Meantime Job Fletcher lighted another candle, and holding it in his hand, looked first to the door, which he bolted and locked, and then went to the cupboard indicated by his wife.

'Ah sure enough; here it be. And she ain't touched it—not a morsel. Poor Nanny! now, what can she and the young 'uns a-had for dinner! She said she wouldn't, and dang me if she have;' saying which he brought down from the highest shelf a cold pheasant, part of a loaf of brown bread, two plates, knives and forks, and a couple of rude mugs. He then passed through the door by which Nanny had retired, and shortly returned with a jug of table-beer. Having placed these things comfortably on the table, he called at the foot of the stairs,—

'Come, lass, make haste wi' the little 'uns, and come down.'

Presently Nanny appeared; but she hesitated to take her seat at the table, and sat down looking wistfully at her husband.

'Now wife,' said he, good-naturedly, 'take the plate; it won't bite ye,' and he laughed at her fears. It stood before her untouched.

'I can't, Job, indeed I can't; it's the wages of sin; it's a sacrifice.'

'Nonsense;' and he came round to her. 'Come, Nanny, to oblige me; you never mind about Dan Morton. Take and eat a bit; it's not pison; and, as to the wages o' sin, if we gets no worse off the farm, there won't be much harm done.'

'I can't bear it, Job, I can't indeed;' and one large, slowly-gathering tear, fell on his velveteen sleeve, as he put his arm tenderly round her neck. 'It seems as if it would choke me. If anything was to happen to you, what would become of us?'

'Nothin' 'ill happen to us; doan't ye be afeard, my lass; the squire and Dan Morton's too good friends for that.' Nanny began slowly to gulp down the pheasant, watered with her tears.

It was not in her nature to be long very sad; and she ate what was put before her, though without much relish for what she knew to be stolen food. Her husband was a kind persuader, where her own hunger failed to convince. She was a good and well brought-up woman; had been in the service of the Carringtons, and an especial favourite of old Aunt Philly in the school. She had married a man a little below her in manners, and without the advantages of the education by which she had profited; but she never repented her choice, for he was the kindest and handsomest man in either parish; and Nanny knew that the rosiest bed has the most thorns. He shocked her principles sometimes, but he never injured her by an unkind word or deed. He made her tremble for himself; for Job Fletcher was an incorrigible poacher, and latterly it had produced its invariable result—evil communications were beginning to corrupt good manners.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LOWER CLASSES.

'And guile and ruffian force were all their trade.'
An Allegory.—THOMPSON.

AN unsuccessful attempt upon the latch of the door was followed by a loud knock, evidently with a stick. Job returned from his place by his wife's side, and took the pheasant, now half-eaten, with the two plates, and placed them carefully in the cupboard, which he locked. He then unbarred the door. Dan Morton stood upon the threshold. He was a giant in size.. Job Fletcher was as fine a young man as need be looked upon. His height must have been six feet and an inch or two. As the two men stood together in the semi-darkness of the cottage, there was but very little, if any, difference in this respect: yet Morton looked a giant

by the side of the other. His enormous breadth of chest and shoulders, his length of limb, and his ragged and unkempt hair and beard, both of a fiery red, gave him an appearance which could be described by no word so well as brutality. His face was broad and flat, his forehead low and receding, his brow was heavy and knotted above his eyebrows, which were almost bare of hair. His eyes were small and bright, with a cunning ferocity shining in them; his nose was short and flat, telling a tale of more than one long and savage battle in the ring; where his great strength almost served to conquer the superior science of smaller men. His mouth was large and thick lipped, and his hands and feet even disproportionately large, for his enormous bulk. In looking at him, he seemed to possess every quality for deeds of lawlessness and violence save one. Agility was not his characteristic; and Job Fletcher by his side was endowed, by comparison, with positive refinement. The most conspicuous parts of his dress were a bright-coloured neckcloth, knotted

loosely round his throat, corduroy breeches, and very strong leathern gaiters. He carried in his hand a short stick of some heavy wood, and was accompanied by a mongrel sheep dog, manifestly a pointer with his tail cut off; which greeted Job with a low growl, and, after looking at the cat, which retired back up and hackles standing underneath Nanny's chair, curled himself up before the fire. He seemed conscious that his master's visit was not to be a very transitory one.

Mrs. Fletcher looked positively frightened; but endeavoured to do the honours of her house with a gentility innate, if not acquired in a better school than that of Sommerton.

'Good evening, Morton; you seem cold; stir the fire, Job; is the fog as heavy as it was an hour ago?' She would willingly have engaged Morton's good feelings, if he knew what such things were, in behalf of her husband.

'Fog,' replied he, without removing his hat, and warming his feet on the hob at the same time. 'It hangs over the cover side, as if we

should never see a branch of it again. Curate been here to-night, Job?'

'Arn't seen him these three weeks.'

'What! not at the old shop. Why, man, you be grown quite wicked,' retorted the other, with a malicious laugh, which roused the woman. 'You don't look arter him, Mrs. Fletcher. He be a bad boy, be Job Fletcher.'

'He saw him the day before yesterday in church, so he ain't so bad as some folks, Mr. Morton; but Mr. Scarsdale's safe at home by this time, I hope.'

'He be pryin' about, looking arter his flock, like the wolf, d—— him,' rejoined Morton. He's been dining at the Hall, and gone up to the night school. Squire be away in Lunnun, so he and the young missus be arter their games; and he ain't been dining on bread and cheese, I'll be bound. Is that all you're got for supper? Come, Job, man, let's have 'em out.'

Job laughed, and winked to his wife; who however sat immovable. Then he rose, went to the cupboard, and brought down the pheasant,

with another plate, on which he immediately placed almost the remainder of the bird, cutting a huge slice of bread at the same time, and offering it to Dan Morton.

'No! no! dang it; I be tired o' such dainties: to-morrow be Saxonby market, and I means going in for a shin o' Mr. Shamble's beef—there, that'll do for me,' added he, as he cut off a huge slice of cheese, and helped himself to a mug of beer. 'Ah! that's a Charnside bird, I know, they be better fed nor the squire's; but they be nothing to the long wood and the canal bank at Spring Vale.'

'You seem to know all about 'em, Morton,' said Job Fletcher, who went on with his supper during the conversation.

'Well, I knows a game country, when I sees it. None o' your plashed hedges for me. There's a sight too many wood-pigeons hereabouts.'

'What harm do they do?' asked Job Fletcher.

'They're always on the move, d—— 'em,

said Morton, who usually uttered a curse on everybody or thing which interfered with his interests; and it was no empty sound with him. He followed it up at most times by active measures to secure its fulfilment.

The men relighted their pipes, and drew their chairs towards the fire, which was replenished by a large piece of coal, unbroken; and Mrs. Fletcher rose, without comment, and produced a bottle and two horns.

'Put a log to warm by the fire, Nanny; we may want it.'

At that moment there came a knock at the door; it was not a timid knock, it was decisive enough; but this time it was a finger, not a stick. The door opened, and Mr. Scarsdale entered.

At first he drew back, seeing two where he had expected to find only one man by the fire.

'Good evening, Mrs. Fletcher; how are you, Fletcher?' said the curate, as the man rose and smiled good-humouredly, bowing with rustic simplicity.

'Pray come in, sir; it's a bad night to be out,' and so great was the effect produced by the natural courtesy of his companion, that Morton rose and removed his hat, which hitherto he had kept on his head.

'Is that you, Morton?' said Mr. Scarsdale, at once recognizing the giant, when he stood up, 'Keep your seat, and don't let me interrupt you. I have to walk to Saxonby, and I want a light for my cigar. I saw one through your shutters, as I was passing, and just turned in, otherwise I must have gone without.' He took his cigar to the fire, and so far was Morton mollified by a parson who smoked, that he screwed up a piece of paper, and held it for him. As he went out of the door, Mrs. Fletcher dropped a curtsy, and an audible 'Thank ye, sir.' After making her husband and his guest comfortable, she glided from the room without exchanging a word on the late and unexpected visit.

'Conscience doth make cowards of us all.' And though nothing could have been simpler

or more innocent, than the appearance of the cottage, or more natural than the visit, Job felt uneasy at something or other. He was conscious of not having been caught in the best of company. Even Morton, without those sentiments of respect which actuated the Fletchers, male and female, in their intercourse with their parish priest, tingled with an undefined dislike for affinity with something so different from himself. If Scarsdale had been a psalm-singer or Pharisaical observer of outward ceremony only, no one would have more willingly insulted him than Dan Morton; but it was, in his mind, impossible to laugh at a clergyman who was frank, honest, and practically useful; and who was going to walk through a thick fog to Saxonby at nine o'clock at night, with a cigar in his mouth. It was so different from anything which Morton expected his spiritual adviser to be. He was likely to be a bitter enemy, but he was sure to be an open one.

To a man like Job Fletcher there is some-

thing wonderfully attractive in sport, and everything connected with it. As a boy he was always playing truant to go and look at the hounds, when they came into his neighbourhood. As a lad, he was always to be met with at the meets, holding open the gates for the gentlemen, and earning more by his idleness than two or three days' work would have given him. When he grew older, he never omitted an opportunity of learning where the partridges jugged, and from looking at them too often, he sometimes joined in taking them. He could scarcely be then called a poacher, as going out at night was an exceptional case; but he had his eyes about him, when at work, and could see a hare quicker than most men in the parish. His occasional depredations were overlooked, as he was very useful to the keepers. He knew quite as well as they where a fox was to be found; and could have told when and why he was not to be found at the right time. Abel Bradfield would have been very angry with a keeper who was clumsy enough to have

been found out destroying them. It was said the rabbit-traps were conveniently large in the Sommerton covers.

With all these tastes and opportunities, it is not strange that there was nothing repulsive to him in Dan Morton; and there was a positive fascination in his conversation, which always turned on the pursuit of game, and was full of information and adventure; for Morton had been a sojourner in strange lands, and talked of bustards and capercailzies, kangaroo's flesh and jackal hunting, buffaloes and rhinoceroses, as if they were barn-door fowls, or home-bred pheasants. There were tales of endless woodlands, and rivers full of fish to be had for the taking; and altogether he had a life to expose so full of adventure and peril, that Job Fletcher was enchanted in spite of himself and his wife's remonstrances. To do Dan justice, it was his natural element, and he looked less repulsive while relating his experiences among game. He would almost have adorned a felon's dock if the charge had been one of successful

poaching, accompanied by murderous assault on a keeper.

'Not much of a night for our work, Job,' said Morton, drawing his chair nearer to the fire, and smoking a short black pipe, which he had laid aside for a moment on the entrance of Mr. Scarsdale.

'Well, no! one wants a little light for it; but what work do you mean?'

Job looked as if he longed for a job, and that there was one in particular waiting for him.

'Oh! nothing particular, but the fog is so dark and cold that I think it's going to freeze; and then we shall have 'em at our pheasants again; eh, Job?' This was such a curious way of putting it, that it made Job laugh in spite of himself.

'And you think as we ought to be first sarved? We'll leave 'em a few, Dan.'

'Sure-lie. But if Mr. Jennyngs comes any more nonsense with me about that little bit o' ground as I wants to my cottage, d— me if I doan't shoot 'un some fine night.'

'Nonsense about shooting, Dan. What would ye have? You do as you like, you get the best house in the parish, you never has to ask twice of the squire for anything, you takes half-days when you like, you've come down from the works to the farm below the hill, and now ye talk o' shooting; why what be ye thinkin' on, man?'

'And why shouldn't I, pray? I'm as good a man as the squire any day, and knows more than he does. If it warn't for Miss Ellen, I'd a told him a bit o' my mind before now.' The black bottle was getting lower, and taking effect upon Morton, who had been at the beer-shop earlier in the evening.

'But I don't see what the squire's done to you?' said Job, rather dogmatically.

'Well, then, he's turned the old man into the workus.'

'But you'd a had to keep 'un yourself, if he hadn't.'

'May be or not; ought to a kept him hisself; and should if I'd a been here; but the old 'un's not so stout as he was.'

'Miss Ellen told 'un to stop where he was,' rejoined Job, not sorry to say a good word for her. 'My missus heard her order Jennyngs out; but the old man wouldn't stop. He'd a bee in the bonnet, Dan.'

'Good cause too.' Then he paused a little, and looked straight into the fire, as if his mind was wandering among forms and scenes far away. At length he said, 'When be the hounds a coming here, Job?'

'Next week, I take it; but the meets ain't out yet.'

'Then mind you're at the bottom of the cover; and we mustn't know one another, if we meet—keep a wide berth—we shall see what there is in the low cut; we can afford a night or two up yonder; and we'll give the baronet a turn when the leaves is off. He'll not be shootin' his'n before Christmas, there's time enough. I owe the Carringtons a turn. Master Stafford it was as pressed for a conviction last year.'

They smoked on in silence, not saying much

to one another, till at length Fletcher said, somewhat unexpectedly, 'How's the iron get on, up by them new blasting furnaces?'

'Well, pretty well, I should think, for a new concern; six or seven hundred tons a week, and coal and a rail just handy; he must be coining money all over this estate.'

'All the better for Mr. Laurence; he'll have it all, I suppose.'

'Not he; it's the girl as gets this property; Master Laurence takes the big place up in the north somewheres,' and he knocked the ashes from his pipe.

'How's that then?' demanded Job Fletcher of his companion.

'The old man left this to her; she'll have a fine fortune she will.'

Another pause; 'Why don't you go up to the works? I think I shall. The work's hard, but the pay's better. I think I must, for Nanny and the young 'uns.'

'Don't you be a fool, Job. I bin there. There's as much as we want to be got here, and

you can't work like a horse all day and all night too. I got something as 'ull do for us in a month or two. Meantime there's plenty to eat and to spare too, and you know how to get it.'

'But I tell you, Morton, Nanny don't like it. She's better brought up nor I, and doan't see things in the same light, you know. Truth is, I've half a mind to give it up.'

'Not yet, Job, wait a bit. She won't mind it when she can get a comfortable bit for the children, and something to pay the rent. We got an order down from London to supply a great house with game at so much a head, all we knows how to do; there'll be six on us with you, and there's no covers in the county can stand against us, when the time comes. Ah! she won't mind it when the time comes. Besides, what's wages? just nothing; how's a man to find rent, and food, and firing, and clothes, and just a sup o' beer or somethin' more, and his club, an' all out o' ten shillin' a week? Danged if I couldn't eat as much at a meal,' and the huge monster opened his

mouth and grinned again from ear to ear at the notion.

'We gets a trifle more than that with one thing or the other, though it is hard work to match it, to be sure. It ain't for me, but it's Nanny as I thinks on. And there's her brother, second keeper at Sir Michael's—Lord! what would he do if he wor to catch me!'

'Why, let ye go again all the easier, to be sure. What's the use of a brother, if he won't stand in a bit?'

'No chance o' that, Dan; he's a true-bred 'un.'

'And so be we true-bred 'uns. He's bred for sarvice, I suppose, and a d—d bad sarvice too. He don't think as the game belongs to him any more nor to Sir Michael, do he?—leastways I don't.'

'I don't think so myself, Dan; but if we're caught, what's to become of Nanny and the little 'uns?'

Job looked seriously bent on a new life as he spoke.

'Never you mind about them—they'll be took care on; and as to hurtin' me, or anything belongin' to me, Master Bradfield might as well cut his own hand off.'

Job had so often heard the same inexplicable inuendo from the lips of his companion, that he had ceased to attach any importance to it; though if he had been accustomed to any logical process of the mind, he might have seen cause to give some credit to the apparently idle boast.

Dan Morton soon after raised himself from his seat, and taking his hat, and relighting his pipe, he gave his dog a kick, which roused him from his sleep, and went out of the cottage with a rough 'Good-night.'

This is not a bad opportunity to consider the antecedents of Dan Morton.

Of course, Dan had been a baby. There was not much trace of it left, and, like himself, the conception seemed too great for the production of any brain. We can imagine him a boy. He was so once, and the son of not

honest nor industrious parents. They lived in the village of Claygate, not many miles from the scene of our story. Until the birth of Dan himself, the parish had been purely agricultural. His father had enjoyed a reputation even then not consistent with the Arcadian simplicity of rustic life. The much-vaunted innocence of the labourer has a close affinity with knock-knees and imbecility of mind; his vices with the uncivilized ferocity of a savage. When Dan was five or six years old, the discovery of iron in the clay, the erection of furnaces, and the employment of additional and skilled labour, added refinement to the village calendar of crime. Among the first to profit by this expanse of education was Dan's father; and, by consequence, Dan himself. His mother, who might have saved him—for mothers do save boys, you know—was dead and gone; and, rather than have a quiet home and a new wife, old Morton lodged at the public, and kept house in the tap-room for himself and his son. One thing the parson of the parish did

for the young Rechabite (for at ten years old he would drink nothing but water—with a little gin in it), he sent him to school. This might have been of much service to him—as it was, he only corrupted the rest; and when he removed him, it was to make four shillings a week by giving assistance on the tramway. He was well up in pitch and toss; he was a head taller than any boy in the village school of his own age, and far behind them in decent acquirements; he attracted notice from all who visited the school for his singular backwardness and ugliness—until he began to believe that the right thing was to be at the bottom of his class and a head above it. Sunday was his holiday; and, as his parish priest had often told him that no work should be done on that day, but that a certain measure of innocent recreation was even commendable, he passed it in cock-fighting or badger-baiting, in tracking hares, and setting springes for pheasants. If sold as a young one, he might have been recommended as 'fast in all his paces.'

As Dan Morton advanced in years, he scarcely grew better. His father was a man whose reputation was so bad as to have subjected him to every suspicion, but he boasted of never having been convicted. This respectable old man held his head high among his neighbours. He had never been found out. His boldness was tempered with discretion. As to Dan, he knew of nothing wrong in the domestic circle—for poaching was a great national virtue in the neighbourhood, excepting among the preservers; and what could a keeper or two in the world signify, more or less?

Poaching is a very curious phase of the agricultural epidemic—it is almost incurable; and though dangerous enough, as leading to other fiercer maladies, it is regarded as of small importance in itself. Nobody strives to check it, excepting by such remedies as are totally inadequate to the disease. So old Giles Morton, or Morton Giles, as he was indiscriminately called, being of doubtful lineage, and not caring to hand down one name more than another to his son,

went through life; and so young Dan had followed him, until a sporting foreman at the works from Birmingham took him by the hand, and finding it strong enough and thick enough to kill an ox, like Milo of old, put him in the hands of the Warwickshire Resurrectionist—a name acquired by his celebrity for bringing beaten men to the post.

Young Dan had pluck and strength, but was deficient in that part of the art of self-defence which requires quickness and intelligence. He was not bad in the Provinces, where his length and power gave him great advantages with moderate yokels; but when he was put down in the prize ring, he was knocked out of time in fifteen minutes by the Burstall Rooster, and returned upon his father's hands with a broken nose, a damaged reputation, and seven pounds ten collected on the spot for his capacity—to take punishment. His trainer and supposed backer, who had taken his measure beforehand, won good stakes; and no one was the worse for the fight but the men at the Claygate

Works who had put down the couters on their man, and the ratepayers of Great Britain, whose pockets support the gaols and workhouses of this happy country.

Ugliness daunts no woman; but some qualities in Dan Morton, physical or mental, had happily frightened the sex, and improvident marriages could not be added to the list of his venial peccadilloes. He was bad before, but the Birmingham journey finished him. As long as there was anything to be got without labour, Dan Morton had no objection to help himself. He was to be found at statutes—why? nobody knew; at horse-fairs, where he enjoyed much vagabond company, and was not averse to taking charge of a few horses, so long as he might ride. Of ratting he was very fond; and would have adopted it as a profession, but unfortunately, at the opening of his career, at the very drawing up of his articles, he was detected with his pockets full of live rats at the door of a barn which he was paid for clearing at the rate of fourpence a head,

and the case was so very clear, that even his well-known reputation, either for honesty or as a bully, did not save him. He was now nearly forty-five; at the time he was twenty-three he was a vagabond upon the face of the earth.

The Claygate Ironworks and the Sommerton Estate had belonged for some time to the father of Abel Bradfield. He had bought them for a small sum of money, being at the time a rising man, manager of the Claygate Works. The money with which he was supposed to have bought the Sommerton property was the produce of some other venture. Indeed that property, some said, the old man had not bought at all; but had taken possession of, under a peculiar clause, existing in the mortgage deeds, by which the estate had passed from the hands of Sir Reginald Carrington, the uncle of the present baronet. Be that as it may, the Sommerton Estate was old Bradfield's. The old man was an unscrupulous person, with no pretensions even to respectability of character in a moral sense, and with no feelings of a

gentleman in an ethical one. He wanted tools fitted to his hand for many a questionable purpose; and no one in the parish wondered that he should regard with favour two men like the Mortons, who made but a show of labour in his service, but were always treated with the consideration that belongs to the unscrupulous classes.

Some thirty years ago a deed of daring had been done in the county. Nothing had transpired to fix the highway robbery upon anyone in particular; the circumstances of it were mysterious in every way; nor was it till long afterwards, that it was recollected that the Mortons, father and son, had emigrated within no long time of its occurrence. They had returned again to this country three years ago.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HIGHER CLASSES.

'Girt with many a baron bold,
Sublime their starry fronts they rear,
And joyous dames and statesmen old
In bearded majesty appear;
In the midst a form divine.'

The Bard.—GRAY.

SIR MICHAEL CARRINGTON had been religiously silent on the subject of his conversation with Abel Bradfield. He was a proud man, and he felt, wisely or not is another question, exceedingly indignant at the proffered alliance. We hardly know whether he argued the subject very logically, for there was truly a vast difference between the tone of mind in the old country gentleman and the millionnaire. We venture to imagine that he rather missed that point, and saw only the enormous gulf between the man of the aristocracy, the descendant of

kings, and the man of the people; the one, grand in his impoverishment by the folly of his ancestors and his own; the other, grovelling and dependent on the resources of paternal and personal industry and management. Be that as it may, the old baronet brooded in silence, not making a confidant even of Lady Carrington. As to anyone else, the thing was to be despaired of. Aunt Philly would have laughed aloud, and probably paraded the advantages of such a match (alliance, by the way, is the word for high contracting parties). Evelyn would have felt some degree of compunction for a man who meant to do her the greatest honour he could, or proposed to himself her as the greatest source of gratification to himself, for there are two ways of reading the text; Stafford would have possibly gone straight to Sommerton, and demanded reparation for the intentional injury, at the point of the sword, and exposed to the whole county, for his own revenge, that of which the worthy old gentleman was so heartily ashamed. He therefore 'pocketed up his

wrongs,' and betook himself to the chase for consolation.

This gentleman of the olden school was not perfect. He had his infirmities of temper especially, at which times, I regret to say, he swore roundly. It was a bad fashion, of an epoch passing away. For a week or two nothing went right; and when the opposition was withdrawn, as we have seen, by Laurence Bradfield's unwillingness to fight, still the grooms who brought his horse to the door, and the people who got in his way in the garden, had a bad time of it. I do not think that they went, any of them, to the place to which he sent them; we may presume his threats to have been disregarded; and it should be a warning to others of like temperament not to throw away valuable language to no purpose.

There was, however, something very dignified in Sir Michael's hatred of Abel Bradfield. He utterly ignored his existence, as far as conversation or any interest in his proceedings was concerned; and the whole family of Carringtons

seemed to follow in the baronet's steps. It is not to be inferred from this that Sir Michael had any of that childish vanity which overlooks the claims of its neighbours to distinction. He was as kindness and complaisance itself to the poor; shook hands heartily with the farmers and tradesmen, upon other than electioneering principles; was 'hail-fellow well-met' with the doctors and lawyers and small fry of Saxonby, male and female; opened his doors annually to the clergy, and even more frequently to the inferior clergy, some of whom, in that neighbourhood, as in others, had been seeking gentility at the point of their religion, and were trading upon their office for an unprecedented countenance in good society. The Carringtons could afford very well to do all this; but impertinent rivalry was not to their taste. There is little doubt that one gentleman would rather have gone out of the world an attenuated corpse as Stafford Carrington, than have remained in it as a sturdy and uncompromising Bradfield.

'Who dine here to-day, Margaret?' said Sir

Michael one morning, after breakfast, to Lady Carrington. He was dressed, as English gentlemen should be dressed, in the whitest of buckskins and black boots, ready for a ride to the magistrates' bench, at Saxonby.

'Besides ourselves, Lady Sarah, Skeffington, the Duke, George Singleton, Mrs. Augustus Reynard, and that new curate at Chessington, with his pretty wife, that Evelyn called on last week. I don't know him, but she's charming; and old Darby sleeps here.'

'Is Aunt Philly coming?' inquired Sir Michael.

'Certainly, my dear; who's to talk to the duke? I believe he'd marry Aunt Philly, if the duchess was to die.'

'How's the curate to get here? Does he keep a carriage?'

'No; but I've told him that there's a dressing-room at his service if they like to come early; and we'll send them back at night in the brougham. He has a dog-cart, or pony-chair, I believe.'

'Where's Evelyn?'

'Gone to her aunt's, I think. The men are shooting. Stafford has no horse fit, and Lord Mentmore preferred a day at home.'

'Does he stay on next week?' asked the baronet.

'I don't think he does. He goes to Newmarket; but talks of returning for the Saxonby ball.'

'I hope it will amuse him.'

'I've no doubt it will, my dear, or he wouldn't stay.' And Lady Carrington had a conscious look, as of one carrying a basket on her head, with something worth getting at within it. Sir Michael did not share her triumph, and was eminently in the dark, at least if there was anything like enlightenment to be desired.

That mental obscurity accompanied him to Saxonby, and spread a halo, if I may say so, on all the proceedings at the magistrates' meeting that day. His friend Darby was there; a pluralist, the editor of the great Tory paper of the county, the 'Revolver;' his enemy, Abel

Bradfield, was there, who was only so far right in his views, that he contradicted the decisions of the other two, who were as often wrong. When he was wrong, the others were right. They balanced accounts in this manner, until the Saxonby bench had become a paragon of just judgment in the neighbourhood.

They let off an outrageous poacher, because Sir Michael was too proud to contest the point with Bradfield. Bradfield was strong in his acquittal; and himself gave a character to one Dan Morton, as a hard-working, industrious man. Policeman F 164 received a high eulogium from Mr. Bradfield for having done his duty, and was severely censured by Sir Michael for having overstepped it, *in re* one of his tenants. They convicted the wrong man in a case of assault, and had to admonish the plaintiff not to commit himself any more in the same way; then they begged his pardon, and let the defendant off altogether. They wanted to flog a boy of sixteen, and were only prevented from doing so by their clerk, Mr. Darville, who

hinted at the illegality of the punishment. However, Sir Michael and the Rev. Darby went their way, and Mr. Bradfield went his, and the people were highly delighted with the administration of justice, which they regarded rather as the corrector of the law.

The pleasures of amalgamation are great: even the stomach delights to bear witness to this truth. Nothing so healthful as a grand variety of viands. The stomach that feeds only on mutton and beef becomes crude, hard, insensible. A vegetable diet is weak and insipid, and tends to paralyze natural powers of digestion. An entire devotion to the extreme delicacies of the table palls, and, without satisfying, overloads the palate. A judicious mixture promotes health, vigour, and enjoyment. It is the same with your guests; and Lady Carrington's table was no exception to the rule.

The duke, a truly sensible man of the highest class in every respect, was delighted with the curate's wife, and indulged in the notion that she was some lady of fashion, who from country

tastes, or eccentric inclinations, had not exhibited herself in his orbit. She was far the best dressed of the company, having studied the ornamental and becoming, in anticipation of some such fortunate occasion for display. The duke imagined it to be an ordinary toilette, such as might well appear at a small and rapidly-organized dinner, and secretly wished the duchess was equally well got up. The editor of the 'Revolver,' once out of the quarter-sessions and the editor's box, was sparring with George Singleton, a master of hounds, who had no serious ideas of any sort or kind, who regarded the quarter-sessions and the county politics with equal disgust, and was deep in the mysteries of earth-stopping, and the Battle of Farnborough, where he chose to believe that he had seen the reverend editor himself.

'Yes, yes; come, Darby, it won't do. I saw you myself, hiding behind the Bishop of Oxford. Plenty more of you, you know; no harm in it at all. Besides, it was quite a national thing.' And that end of the table laughed.

'No, no; I protest,' said the divine, who was at all times hideously ugly, and none the handsomer for having his mouth full. 'Singleton's only joking; he wasn't there himself; and as to—'

'Don't be ashamed of it, Darby. If I hadn't seen you I should have known the article in the "Revolver." It must have been yours; and none could have written it but an eye-witness. Finest bit of writing I ever saw; quite Homeric. What with the thumps, and the falls, and the brawn, and the muscle, and the positions, and the finish—finest thing I ever saw. Yes, it was, upon my soul; everybody says so.'

After this it was impossible to deny anything, and the Rev. Tom Darby quite enjoyed his holiday after the feasts of politics to which he was accustomed.

Mrs. Augustus Reynard, a very good-looking woman of five-and-thirty, whose husband, Major-General Reynard, had been left behind somewhere in the north or the south,—she didn't pretend to know where,—went to work upon the

curate, and mixed up such a quantity of Newmarket information and stable-language, with Sunday-schools and parish exercise, that they were mutually pleased, and, I believe, instructed.

'Fifty children, have you, indeed?' said old Miss Philly Carrington, who chose to be deaf for the present.

'In the Chessington schools, madam,' roared the curate; while the old lady, looking grimly enough, as though no *équivoque* had been intended, replied, 'I didn't suppose that there was another Danaus at table, sir. I hope you teach them the distinction between goats and sheep better than my nephew Walter does here.'

'What's the matter, aunt,' inquired the rector, who was in the middle of a run with Lord Mentmore, who had at last turned to the rector. He had secured a seat rather nearer the salt than etiquette dictates, for the pleasure of sitting near Evelyn, whom however he had not taken in to dinner.

'The matter is diverting enough, my dear

rector; and redounds less to the credit of your scholars' discernment than to their biblical research.'

'Let us have it, aunt,' said Stafford, with a wicked look, quite aware of the old lady's love for a good joke.

The old lady thus adjured pretended to whisper, but like many deaf people was loud enough and interesting enough to be heard all over the table.

'I was asking your Sunday-school children, Walter, the difference between the sheep and the goats; and my old friend Miss Parchment, who never was a beauty, and certainly never had an offer of any kind in her life, was with me. They told me the difference, but I was anxious to test their intelligence further, so I asked one of them which she thought Miss Parchment was likely to be.'

'A very delicate question, aunt.'

'So it was, my dear, more so than the answer as it turned out. "A sheep," said the children; of course I was satisfied, but my

friend, who is very particular, would know the why and the wherefore. There was a long silence, which might have been accepted as sufficient for the purposes, until one of the younger ones replied, "Cos you've gone astray, mum." I needn't tell you there's not the slightest truth in it.'

At intervals was heard Politics, uninteresting enough from their unanimity; Literature, in which Froude and Miss Bradden, the Gladiators and Whewell's Philosophy, About's Madelon and Wheaton's International Law, were raised up in admired confusion; Church Decoration; Shakespearian Revivals; the Irish Agricultural Association; the Preservation of Foxes; and the Saxonby Ball.

'Stafford, we've persuaded Lord Mentmore to stay for the ball,' said Lady Carrington, attaching evidently considerable interest to the fact.

'To return for it,' said he. 'Stafford and I are going down to Newmarket next week to look at the horses.'

'Is anything of yours to win the Derby, Mentmore?' asked the duke.

'Yes, duke, if they'll let him. My Cambridgeshire horse was got at, as you know.'

'I'm told so; and that your trainer, Jackson, advised his brother to buy her at the sale for a large sum, when there wasn't a bid besides.'

'My trainer has done many things that have a suspicious appearance at and before the sale. I, however, mistrust report.'

'Where do you go for hunters, Lord Mentmore?' said Sir Michael. 'You must have a difficulty to get many such as you rode for your first horse yesterday.'

'Ireland, Sir Michael; and that market has become so small, that the Agricultural Association has petitioned Her Majesty on the subject.'

'And what's the remedy, in your opinion?'

'Government money for cross-country, or hunters' stakes, at the principal meetings, instead of the Queen's plates, or in addition to

them, for *bonâ fide* hunters which have never been in trainers' stables.'

'But if the turf is in fault, Mentmore,' said the duke, 'why don't you reform it? you have it to answer for.'

'Not at all, duke; all the power's gone: and for every gentleman that owns a horse, there are twenty or thirty blacklegs, publicans, livery-stablemen, and ex-trainers, who keep them. Quantity is the thing, not quality; and if they can only get them pulled often enough in handicaps, the worst of them will make more than he's worth at last. Gambling has ruined the turf as a gentleman's pursuit; and fond as I am of a horse, I shall give it up.'

'Saxonby ball. Not go to the Saxonby ball—of course, dear, you'll go?' said Mrs. Augustus Reynard, 'it's the best fun in the world. Mr. Stafford Carrington goes, and Sir Michael naturally, diplomatically or politically —everybody goes. It's far better than that stuck-up county ball at N——, where one goes at twelve in a last season's dress, and

comes away again at two, having had a sandwich and a glass of sherry.'

'There's Kœnig's music they give us.'

'It's all they do give us, for a guinea. Oh, oh! Saxonby for ever! Such crowds of innocence and white muslin. Does your taste lie that way, Mr. Carrington?'

'Would you think me exactly polite, if I were to say, yes?'

Mrs. Augustus Reynard, though a good sort of woman, was not remarkable for the one or the other, and only laughed.

'I take Stafford with me,' said his father, 'to canvass the women.'

'And I always find that they have already promised their votes,' said he.

'To whom?' asked the baronet, afraid of more opposition.

'To my father, of course, who has been beforehand with me.'

'Have you seen the new church decorations at Sommerton?' asked the curate, not aware that the subject was almost tabooed.

'No, I have not,' replied Lord Mentmore, who was equally ignorant of the situation; 'have you, Stafford?'

'No: but I've heard of them. The Bradfield arms make a great show among the "apostles," I'm told,' replied Carrington.

'We've just restored a monument here of Elizabeth's reign. It was destroyed by the Puritans, but sufficient colour remained on it, and we have endeavoured to be right this time,' said the rector; 'people are so mighty particular now-a-days.'

'Yes, the colouring's everything; and if they'd be as particular about their facts as they are about their church decoration, nobody would find fault with them.'

'Shakespeare,' said a voice somewhere about the table—'certainly Fechter is very fine, but less so, if possible, in his Shakespearian characters than in others. As to Othello, it has a ludicrous sound in the mouth of a foreigner; one is always expecting it to degenerate into nigger language; and

Hamlet never could have been intended for the stage.'

'But it was acted in James's reign several times, and the copy of the original edition is in the Duke of Devonshire's library,' said old Aunt Philly, who was an authority upon Shakespeare.

'I ought rather to have said that its beauties entitled it to much closer attention than we could give it on the stage, Miss Carrington,' said the duke, who had been the first speaker.

'The stage in those days occupied the position of the press now, and it was the shortest and surest road to reputation. What could only be read by few was seen by the many,' said Stafford Carrington; 'besides, what Horace says is perfectly true, and a valuable axiom—'

> "Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem
> Quam quæ . . . . . "

'I beg a thousand pardons, my dear mother.

'Is that for being betrayed into rational conversation before us? Pray go on, Mr. Car-

rington,' said Mrs. Augustus Reynard, who was a sincere admirer of the heir of Spring Vale.

When Lady Carrington retired to rest, she certainly had something on which to congratulate herself. Mentmore was the most refined of lovers, but he had not attempted to conceal his admiration for Evelyn Carrington. If mothers ever are flattered, through their daughters, we think the Lady of Spring Vale Manor might have been. And she had such an easy conscience too! Why! if Mrs. Silvertop, or the Duchess of Grace-dieu, or Lady Maria Sackington, or hundreds of others in the world of fashion, had caught such a fish, their struggles and exertions would have taken away their breath before they landed him. Such a rent-roll, such a man, they exclaimed; he was worth the struggle; and they could not deny the fact of having toiled all night, every night, even though they had caught the fish. Lady Carrington had no more idea of angling in such streams than I had. The fish came to her waters and hooked himself, but she was

not such a goose as to let him go again, if she could help it. So when she lay down to rest after dinner, she was happy, for her conscience was clear. She made the squire a participator in her schemes; but he was a very bad confederate; at best an accessory after the fact. Very sleepy, had lost his rubber, and consequently his money—not much, for he did not indulge now in the luxury of high play; but he hated losing a rubber; so that all he said was that he wondered 'where Mentmore got such short-legged horses, wished he'd give up Newmarket, and wanted to know what that d—d fellow Bradfield had to do with a coat-of-arms.'

There were others of the party, too, who felt happy enough, considering the possible dyspepsia awaiting them in the morning, from the baronet's good table; to which, notwithstanding excellent pretence, they were not much accustomed. Indeed the lady I have in my eye would call Lord Crackborough, of whom she frequently spoke, *Earl* Crackborough; and

though he is an earl, it betrayed some want of familiarity with society to have called him so. Her husband gently reproved her for it. Gently I say, for Mrs. Buddicom was not to be rashly approached in the suit she had on that night. 'You see, John, others appreciate me, if you don't—the duke was most kind.'

'Ah! my dear, if he would but give us a living. He must have lots in his gift; we'll look when we get home what they are. If any becomes vacant I really think one might ask, you know.'

They went to bed, and both thought a long time of the possibility of such a thing. Buddicom went for the substantials, but the lady could see beyond the living, a world beyond, a domestic chaplaincy, a very unreserved intercourse with his grace, a godfather for the next little Buddicom, a semi-official seat at the ducal table, and such a rise in the social scale, as should render necessary an everlasting order for *moires antiques.*

The duke smoked his cigar with Mentmore

and Stafford Carrington in the housekeeper's room, and declared her to be a remarkably fine woman; and his grace was considered a judge; but that a woman in that dress could want a living, would have occurred to him as simply preposterous.

Lord Mentmore at last fell asleep, after indulging in the most flattering of day-dreams. He was fairly and honestly, as he thought, in love; and, without the slightest conceit, had never been accustomed to believe that his attentions could be unacceptable. It is the good fortune of such positions usually to give an *aplomb*, which in itself half carries its point. Disappointment to such natures comes unexpectedly, and inflicts a severer wound than that felt by ordinary mortals. Oh! what asses we should have been had we all had sixty thousand a year, with our present experience! is a comfortable assurance for the poor man, and a protest against covetousness the most powerful that can be conceived. Lord Mentmore was quite right to go to sleep, satisfied

that the game was in his own hands, when he liked to play it, and that Evelyn Carrington could only regard a few weeks *dalliance* as an honourable sacrifice of time and feeling, to the customs of polite society.

And what was that young lady doing, while the gentlemen were smoking their cigars or unmaking their toilettes? She was in anything but that comfortable frame of mind which nine-tenths of her acquaintance would have enjoyed. She sat in that charming apartment known as 'my own room,' which comprises the mysterious repose of a sleeping-chamber, with the solid comforts and light of a sitting-room. She slept there; and the pillows, on which scarcely a tear had ever fallen, were retired from vulgar gaze by the sort of alcove in which the bed was placed; a raised step almost separated it from the room; and, in winter, heavy folds of rich damask completed its retirement. With equal propriety she not unfrequently breakfasted in the lower part of it, which contained her *chaise longue*, her bookcase of

favourite authors, her desk, her jewel-box, her Sunday-school and clothing club-books, her little gold and silver-headed whips, a tiny dog-collar (sole relic of the deceased), and half-a-dozen other things in which such girls delight, and all of which are enhanced in value by being called, and felt to be, 'my own.' It was the only room in the house in which pure luxury had been cared for. Neither Sir Michael nor Lady Carrington cared for signs of state. They knew themselves, and were known of theirs. But Evelyn was different in taste, in feeling; and a soft and timid nature, too much so perhaps for her own happiness, required to be propped in pillows, and armed with the gentle panoply of velvet pile and or-molu for its due effect.

On the evening in question, Evelyn Carrington sat in a luxurious easy-chair, facing a comfortable fire. She had taken from her table a French novel which was lying on it (I regret to record a bad habit of the young ladies of fashion of the time), but she was not reading

it. She was absorbed in thought; she had inherited a fair portion of pride from her family, and her nature supplied her with a fair quantity of maidenly reserve. Still, the attentions of Lord Mentmore justified an interest in him which would otherwise have been premature. She was far from appreciating the advantages of her position; and she taxed herself fairly and closely as to her own feelings on the subject. They were not satisfactory.

She liked him in common with the world; it was impossible to help it. His manner, especially to women, was not only charming, but positively feminine in its delicacy; and it was so devoted. He forgot himself so entirely. When other men, and they are legion, said, 'Can you resist me?' his appeal was always on the other side. Whatever he felt, he always said, 'I cannot resist you.' He was the most flattering lover in England. It was impossible, too, not to be carried away by his munificence, his noble generosity; and he was almost the only man in whom it would not have been called

ostentation. His personal simplicity of manner procured his exemption from that. And yet Evelyn felt she did not love him, and, strange to say, that she never should be able to do so. This once ascertained, she was a girl who never would allow any consideration in the world to deceive him. The grand question was with her how to save him pain. In the event of a proposal, the difficulty of saying 'No' would be quite as great as the certainty of having it to say. She sympathized with her mother; with her brother, who liked him better than anyone, and who, with all his *insouciance* and assumed levity, was a clear critic of character. She appreciated the disappointment of her family, and she shrunk from inflicting pain; timid and delicate natures do so. But she had made up her mind that a timely retreat into herself might save stronger measures.

A girl's first dream of love is the most beautiful thing in the whole world. A man has no experience of the feeling, and few men the slightest conception of it. Its first avowal is

not pleasant, though taken with an anodyne which lulls. Its innocence, its simplicity, its truthfulness, its refinement, the mysterious charms of an unknown future, its risks, the venture of all the heart's merchandise in one barque, restraints all and each of them; and yet the ministers of a sentiment the most absorbing, a passion the most overwhelming, a gentle stream—let welling into a mighty torrent of eternal happiness or eternal woe.

Evelyn Carrington was not in love, but she was not entirely happy.

CHAPTER IX.

NEWMARKET.

'Metaque fervidis
Evitata rotis, palmaque nobilis
Terrarum dominos evehit ad Deos.'
HOR., *Ode I.*

NEWMARKET! Newmarket! What a quantity of recollections and reflections arise at the summons! What a length of time we go back! Charles I., with his melancholy smile—foreboder of impending fate—watched there the sport we love so well. Old Noll, the fanatic, half preacher, all warrior, changed the venue, but knew too well the influence such tastes had upon the prosperity of his country to turn his back upon the pastime. The man who could have frightened a British Parliament, might almost have made an impression upon the ring. The atrocious depravity of the restored Court

'spotted' the heath once more. There were nobblers in those days; for the monarch who sold himself, without doubt sold other people; and the courtier who robbed his friend of all he held dearest, could not have been delicate about rifling his neighbours' pockets. Then we pass in review a better and a nobler age—the golden age of horse-racing. One fine, good, honest English sovereign is there. Over those courses have ridden the Dukes Francis of Bedford and Queensbury, Sir Charles Bunbury, Lords Grosvenor and Clermont, Kit Wilson, and Frank Standish; and there was a greater than all, whose string was led by Sam Chifney. Those were days when English gentlemen did not fear to assert their own in the face of royalty, and when, happily, dishonesty was the exception, and not the rule.

The present race of legs would have looked exceedingly odd amongst the buckskin breeches and top boots of those glorious pillars of English aristocracy. It would have been worth living for to have seen the stare of astonishment with

which one of those gentlemen would have greeted the impertinent familiarity of a leviathan cobbler or a Brummagem artisan, who should have proposed to write down the name in his book which he had only lately learnt to spell. Or the true lover of a racehorse might well compound to have been under the turf now, for the pleasure of being on it then. I suppose there were scoundrels in every age; but the rascality of the low betting-man was not then known, and trainers and jockeys, even, had a delicacy about being found out. That speculative fishmonger, with his pale face and neutral-tinted neckcloth, which has somewhere been described as a white 'hayband,' was to come, and in his wake the bloodsuckers of unsuspecting youth—the 'mimi and balatrones'—but they were not come yet.

Newmarket is an innocent-looking place. There is a simplicity almost suspicious about it. It is a sort of egg-and-butter-looking place, in which quiet market women come and go; and where, out of season, it would be hard for

honesty to get a living. Dishonesty finds no difficulty at all about the matter. There never was such a quiet-looking place; and its single street seems almost emblematic of its singleness of purpose. It has a quiet, all its own; a downright stupidity, which makes its real sharpness all the more appalling. It is very like a highly successful and respectable leg, whose exemplary conduct in his parish church, extensive charities, domestic tastes, and decent exterior, cover an unparalleled amount of swindling, and make him the admiration, as he is the terror, of minor candidates for honours. So much decent dulness cannot but be the very hotbed of iniquity.

If the stones of that little street could cry out honestly, what would they not recount? How many a mother's tears! a wife's distraction! What ruin! what disgrace! What hopes! what high aspirations, buried in an early grave, together with the honour of a proud name on Newmarket Heath! And all for what? Love of sport or pastime? Oh!

no. Ambition to be first on the list of those who love a horse for himself; admiration for the most beautiful animal in existence, as he is the most generous? Oh! no. But the 'auri sacra fames.' Is it possible that, to add to that heap which is already more than sufficient for all the necessaries and comforts of life, and for most of its luxuries, a gentleman will risk position, reputation, the love of friends, his own self-respect, and every obligation he owes to God and man? Is it possible that he will discredit a name which has descended to him pure and unblemished, and which is his no longer to pollute, but which he holds as an heirloom, to be transmitted to his children's children? No man of family has a right to play with his reputation any more than with an entailed estate. Very particular indeed, are we, to put checks on the transfer of our property, to place a strong reservation on the right to alienate our houses and our lands; but it never occurs to us that a spotless reputation is the grandest entail we can leave to our heir, and that, if it has

come to us somewhat tarnished, it is our business to restore its brightness, as we should have striven, by honest means, to restore a shattered property to its original value.

Lord Mentmore had fallen on the turf in evil times. The 'Io triumphe' which went up to heaven, as soon as it was known that he intended to keep horses, had never been surpassed, and will never be equalled, until the Prince of Wales's string shall once more be seen issuing from stables for their morning exercise upon Epsom Downs, or Ascot or Newmarket Heath. Lord George was dead. The grand reformer of the system, the Napoleon of the crusade against the legs, was gone; and his mantle had fallen, whole and undivided, upon none. There was still the great Admiral, honest and able, it is true, with a leaning towards the bookmakers, and handicapping, short distances, light weights, and other loopholes, because the gentlemen could take care of themselves. If the Admiral had only been a rascal, the system would have fallen; but his well-known

honesty kept it, rotten as it was, upon its props.

There was a dearth of money, that is, money to be won. The gentlemen were about cleaned out, and the thieves were nearly reduced to feeding upon one another. Two or three hundred thousand pounds of ready money was a godsend. How they lauded him; the 'Halfpenny Gaff,' a new sporting paper, established for the benefit of the peculiar classes which had of late years swelled the sporting circles of the metropolitan cities, be-praised and be-plastered him then as much as they abused him afterwards. Never was so princely a patron of sport before. The knowing ones played their cards well, and allowed him to win many minor events, and one or two great things—when they could not help it. One thing they made quite safe: he was never to be allowed to pull off a great stake when the money was on. Mr. Jackson, the trainer, was to take care of that; and, although he took into his councils wiser men than himself (for Lord Mentmore, though clever enough,

was too impulsive to be wary), Mr. Jackson managed to get the better of them all.

Mr. Jackson, or Tom Jackson, as he was called, *alias* honest Tom Jackson, was the perfect picture of a perfect treasure. He was rosy-gilled, inclined to corpulence, bald in forehead, with closely-cropped but widely-spreading whiskers, of a light brown or auburn tint, good teeth, and beautifully shorn. No man despised more heartily the modern fallacies of respectability. He was grand, solemn, important, mysterious, and, by consequence, silent. His bow was of the best kind: a mere elevation of the well-twisted broad-brimmed hat, which spoke volumes to his superiors. His ash-plant saved his oratory with his stable boys. He was scrupulously dressed in black broadcloth; it was all broad, his back, his sleeves, and the skirts. His waistcoat was long, large-pocketed, and rounded at the corners, to match his collars; the latter were triumphs of art in their way, and can only now be seen on Jack W—n, the great amateur coachman of his day, and on a few West of

England parsons or squires. His trousers were of sombre hue, but strong and serviceable, strapped within the legs, which were tightly made, as became his office, and fastened beneath the broadest and brightest boots in the world, by a single narrow piece of leather. His blacking was of home manufacture. As Tom Jackson never did anything for himself, he was enabled to preserve his *grande tenue* for at least six or seven hours of every day in the week.

This invaluable treasure, as some friend had *de bonne foi* assured Lord Mentmore that he was, was come of a remarkable family. With one little exception, they had all been in difficulties, had all taken to the turf as jockeys or trainers, or both, and had all got on in the world. They lived well and reputably, and took care never to be found out. The little exception was a small hanging matter, when men were not so particular about fitting a hempen collar round their fellow-creatures' necks. In fact, he was the one that, having been what they called unfortunate, 'never held up his head

again.' It was not a bad way of putting it, and is quite on a par with Hook's 'complaint in the chest.' During his pecuniary difficulties, however, Tom Jackson had made some strange acquaintances, and they served him now in good stead of better ones. They stuck to him, as might have been expected, and, what is exceedingly to his credit, he to them. In one word, there never was a stable so hampered from beginning to end, from the rubicund respectability of the trainer down to the lowest helper, with specious rascality.

'Hollo! Mentmore,' said Tom Thornhill, coming down the steps of the Jockey Club stand, at Ascot, 'you should have put us on that good thing,' as one of Mentmore's two-year-olds was being led back into the enclosure to weigh, having just won a good race hard held.

'Good thing!' rejoined his lordship; 'I hadn't a shilling on her. They told me she couldn't stay the distance, and I've backed the other.'

'Deuced odd! there's Scraper has won a

good stake. He backed her this morning, at pretty good odds. I ought to have followed him, for he's a great pal of Tom Jackson's, and—'

'Pal of Tom Jackson's; I never heard that before.'

'Bless your soul,' said Tom, for it was in his fast days, before he married Alice Dacre, 'he's the man who lent Jackson all the money, and got him out of quod, to go into business,'

'The devil!' said Mentmore; but it set him thinking.

'Is it all right this time, Mentmore?' whispered young Hazard of the 10th, one bright afternoon at Goodwood, as the horses were walking down to the post.

'I hope so,' replied he, 'for I've put the pot on. It's a certainty, I believe,' and the horses started. As they came up the course all the glasses were out, and the Admiral's gruff voice was heard among them.

'Mentmore wins,' shouted Charlie Swallowtail.

'No, he doesn't; whose that in the duke's colours, next the rails?' sung out the Marquis of Chaffbox.

'The Duke wins, and Turniptop second; Mentmore's beat already,' grunted the Admiral, shutting up his glass as he spoke, and turning away to speak to old Lady Mongerton, who had put a pony on Lord Mentmore by the Admiral's advice.

And so it went on; and Mentmore lost and lost, and his friends lost with him; while telegraphic wires were put in requisition after every trial; and when he went to back a really good thing, which had been kept quiet till the last moment, the whole world was before the master of the stable.

Lord Mentmore, like many other men, had an inconsistency, in fact, he was inconsistent, 'impar sibi.' That peculiar phase of this weakness of which I am about to speak is remarkably common. In twenty-five years a new race of men had appeared upon the turf. They were not only not gentleman, they were

scarcely removed in many instances from the lowest dregs of the people. Runaway officials, bankrupt tradesmen, ex-livery stable-keepers, billiard-markers, ruined pugilists, and cobblers and artizans of the lowest class made up the sum total of the new company which visited Goodwood and Newmarket. Lord Mentmore, notwitstanding his absence of all vanity, was the proudest man alive. When he first came upon the turf, he tried hard to ignore the ring, and to bet only with his equals. As long as he confined his book to a few hundreds, that did very well. But he could do nothing with moderation; a wholesome mediocrity was his *bête noire.* So when he got to thousands, he was obliged to call in the intervention of the genii of the ring. When he avowed his intention of breaking the ring, he could do it with nobody's assistance but their own. They were always ready to back anything, or to lay against anything. So he forgot his pride, and elbowed his way, and shouted with the best of them, and in better English, 'I'll lay against ——,

or, I want to back ——, and there was no deficiency of backers or layers when his lordship wanted anything to be done.

Lord Mentmore had an enormous fortune, and a soul quite large enough to have spent every shilling of it, which all men have not. But it had been going and going year after year, and of late years too rapidly even for his liking, He had his cake at a proper time for eating it; when he was hungry and when all his teeth were good. His pride he had put in his pocket for this occasion only. The end justifies the means; besides, everybody else does so excepting ——, and ——, and ——, but then these are old fellows, who have had their day. He might have excepted his friend, Stafford Carrington, but he did not. What wonder that the world should have erected a metaphorical statue to him. They would not have been satisfied with anything under the very largest block; and then in a few years they would have wondered into how small pieces it could be broken. It is always the case with an idol.

However, just when he and Stafford Carrington had decided upon a visit to Newmarket, he was at the height of his popularity. He had thirty horses in training, gave unheard-of prices for his yearlings, lost his money like an English nobleman, was as tolerant of brigands as the government of Naples, and had a book of about 100,000*l.* upon the next Derby, of which he himself had the favourite.

Do these sportsmen and gamblers, like Indian fig-trees, only allow their branches to descend that they may take root more firmly in plebeian wealth; or, like royal houses, may grow again into parent trees, by stooping to the people?

On the Sunday preceding that on which Lord Mentmore and Stafford Carrington were to go down to Newmarket, as they came out of the parish church, at Spring Vale, Lord Mentmore was struck with the beauty of a monument, and turned back to examine it more closely. It was the monument already mentioned. It had been most carefully restored,

and the original colours and gilding repaired. It purported to be erected to a certain 'Lady Catherine Carrington, daughter of the most noble the Duke of D——, first cousin to Her most gracious Majesty Elizabeth, Queen of England, the widow of Sir Reginald Carrington, &c., &c., &c.,' following which announcement was a long piece of poetry, the counterpart of the productions of the Earl of Surrey and Sir Philip Sidney, full of rare conceits, and no disguised praises, such as are common to modern tombs; and which convince me that having gone through life quietly we shall enter upon death with a flourish, or that we only discover excellences when it is too late to profit by them. 'Sublatum ex oculis quærimus invidi.'

'Beautiful monument, Stafford, and very perfectly restored.'

'Yes—I believe we're rather proud of that,' said Carrington, languidly.

'Of the restoration, or the alliance?'

'Both; but I meant the alliance. We have been singularly unfortunate in our marriages.'

'How so? Sir Michael has made up for the family defect, and will be able to put by something in the way of supererogation for his successor.'

Strange to say, this hazardous speech of Lord Mentmore brought a slight throb and a hesitation into Stafford's face and answer, and he was certainly not given to either one or the other.

'Well, I hardly know how; but we seem to have more than our share of lord mayors' daughters, and goldsmiths' and bankers' heiresses, among the former Ladies Carrington.'

'No bad thing either, my good fellow, when the gentlemen are as extravagantly inclined as some of yours are reported to have been.'

The two walked on down the steps which led from the churchyard to the manor. Stafford Carrington was thoughtful for a few minutes, and then said suddenly, as though the subject had burdened him,

'Yes; I presume I am destined to reward the extravagance of two generations by in-

stalling a wealthy manufacturer's daughter in the seat of honour whenever it comes to my turn to do so.'

'And no bad thing either, Carrington; you only meet a difficulty which must come to us sooner or later. See how the great properties change hands. See how these fellows advance upon us. It's better to compromise than be driven out perforce. What do you say now to Miss Bradfield—the heroine of our adventure?'

They had reached the stables, and, as they entered, Stafford Carrington busied himself with his cigar-case before he answered,

'Miss Bradfield—our political rival—yes; that's something like money, to be sure. And what would your friend Scarsdale say if you dispose of the young lady in that way?'

'Scarsdale wouldn't know what to do with it. He'd be for founding a monastery,' said Lord Mentmore, pulling aside one of the rugs, and patting the quarters of a favourite hunter of his friend's.

'Perhaps quite as honourable a use for it

as propping up an impoverished name.' And the words and tone sounded earnest, if not harsh.

Lord Mentmore looked up, surprised at the tone as much as the words. He was silent for a few seconds, and then added,

'One would think, Stafford, that you were beginning to entertain the proposal *au sérieux*. Whoever has the luck to marry that girl will have quite as much beauty as money, if her fortune was the largest in England. What a lovely face!'

Stafford did not make a reply at first, but said, 'Oh! really, well I hardly know her by sight. Evelyn has met her brother once or twice; but we have no sort of acquaintance, I suppose I must have seen her at the county balls once a year; possibly here and there in London. The old man is on our bench, and is a vulgar purse-proud snob. The son's not a bad fellow, I believe; he was at Christ Church with me, but in a different set. What time do we start for Newmarket to-morrow?'

Stafford Carrington was a man of considerable character; among other things, he was always very honest to himself, whatever he might be to the rest of the world. To his family and friends he was rather truthful than candid. He would not have said what was not true, but he would have withheld the truth openly and in defiance of them. To himself he was both truthful and candid. He admitted a fact, and practically examined it. The conversation he had just held told him what he had been suspecting; that he felt an interest in this girl, whom he had seen, as he said, once or twice without looking at, until the day he saw her in the pony carriage. She had interested him far beyond any one whom he had yet seen; and one thing proved it to himself, Stafford Carrington was not a dancing man. He was essentially in ladies' society a lounger. Was seldom seen in town with any but the best persons, and most commonly with married women. He affected to, or did really, undervalue the current conversation of the young

women he met; and as he had attained a reputation, not altogether undeserved of a rising man in society, he was never without it; and was able to choose his own. With all this he had begun to think for the first time in his life of the Saxonby ball. We must be back from Newmarket for the Saxonby ball. What a consideration!

CHAPTER X.

TRAINING.

'Bring up a child in the way he should go.'

Honest Tom Jackson was not a man to be caught napping, especially by his master; so that when he and Stafford Carrington walked up to the stables a day or two after their last conversation, everything was in excellent order; and Mr. Jackson accompanied Lord Mentmore and his friend.

In three sides of a square were contained exactly thirty-six race-horses. Every horse had his separate boy, who was now in attendance, the clothing lightly thrown on, and the sponge, combs, and brushes of everyone laid neatly out upon the leathers, which were spread on the left-hand corner of each stall. They were

ready for inspection; and no stalls in Newmarket or elsewhere, were supposed to have been built with greater attention to the health and comfort of the valuable property they contained. The yearlings were elsewhere; but from two years old and upwards were to be seen some of the best and best-looking horses in England. Not a chain, not a head-stall, not a straw, was out of place; and even to a man like Stafford Carrington, accustomed to the 'comme il faut' above all in stable management, the sight was a treat. He was, besides this, perfectly able to appreciate that reticence, which is to be observed in stable matters at all times; and Lord Mentmore affected no disguise before him.

'How's that horse's leg, Jackson?' said my lord, looking at a very handsome bay horse, a little fleshy, and with a wet linen bandage on one of his fore legs.

'Better, my lord; no harm done, I think;' and it is to be observed that Mr. Jackson touched his hat during the visit occasionally

with one finger, having already saluted with his very best bow at the reception.

'A little short of preparation, isn't he?'

'Think so, my lord?' and a rather supercilious smile crossed his face.

'This one looks as fit as a fiddle, Jackson,' said Lord Mentmore passing on to the next, but without eliciting a reply. He therefore turned to Stafford and said, 'This is our Two Thousand Guineas colt; he went amiss, some say he was got at.'

'Pleasures of a stud,' said Stafford as Jackson moved away out of hearing.

'One of them,' rejoined his companion. 'You'll see the Derby horse by-and-by.'

'Shall I ever see him win? What's this? A rare good-looking one.'

'Newminster and Lady Kingston. He's a little like Stockwell. Jackson's pet we call him; you shall see him gallop to-morrow.'

'How's he engaged? Anything very particular to come off?'

'The first thing is a match for a thousand;

and I've backed him, besides, rather heavily on the strength of a trial, which makes it nearly a certainty.'

Mr. Jackson continued to walk on, describing each horse, as his boy took off the clothing, and presented his bright, beautiful coat to view.

'Here's the Archer, Carrington. He's a fine horse. Looking pretty well, Jackson?'

'Yes, my lord.'

'Is he doing strong work?'

'Pretty well, my lord.'

'I suppose he's forward enough, if we don't run him before?'

'Yes, my lord. I should say so.'

'Not afraid of his legs standing the training?'

'No, my lord;' with another mild but supercilious smile.

'It's rather his weak point, Stafford,' said Lord Mentmore; 'and I think he's as safe to win the Derby as that you and I stand here.'

'Nothing's certain but the Tax-collector and Death; but he's a beautiful colt,' replied Stafford Carrington, 'and my father, who is

an excellent judge, says he's the best two-year old out.'

'He's never been beaten yet; and Wilfred Jones made me give eleven hundred for him as a yearling. You know Jones?

'A little, not intimately.'

'He owes a lot of money.'

'That's not an uncommon failing amongst our acquaintance.'

'I suppose he's all right.'

'All right, my dear Mentmore! what the deuce do you mean?'

'Mean? why I mean that he knows all the stable just as well as I do.'

'Oh! bless you, as honest a fellow as ever lived; d—d hard up; but what does that signify. Jackson knows as much as you and Wilfred Jones put together.'

'Well, yes, I really think he is; but 'pon my soul nobody knows.'

And as they turned away from the stable and wandered towards Mentmore's house, they met the Admiral. He, too, had come down

to see his horses, and to raise a handicap upon the spot.

'Bless my soul, Mentmore,' growled the Admiral, 'did you ever see such a set of fellows about a place in your life as there are here?'

'Perhaps that's just what they say of us, Admiral,' said Mentmore laughing: 'they don't give us the best character in the world, you know.'

The next morning Stafford got up in good time; he dressed almost by candlelight. He was finishing his toilette, when a servant knocked at his door.

'Lord Mentmore will be ready in about half-an-hour, sir; would you take coffee in here? Breakfast is ordered when you return from the Heath. And I was to ask whether you would like to ride one of his lordship's ponies, instead of your own hack.'

'Yes, certainly, I shall be very happy; and I'll be ready in half-an-hour; bring me the coffee and a biscuit or two in ten minutes,' and he finished dressing.

One of the most beautiful sights in the whole world is Newmarket Heath in early morning, a week or two before the consummation of one of its meetings. On either side of the town extend to a distance far beyond the reach of the eye, lines of undulating heath, of a sparse and dry herbage, and unprotected from the influences of atmosphere by any shelter of hill or woodland. Of these two sides the one is devoted to the formation of the largest race-course in the country, covering an area of many square miles, and divided into numerous courses; so that, by constant change of locality, judge, competitors, and spectators, may be gratified with a novelty, and the capabilities of the horses tested by different ground, according to the circumstances of age or distance. With this side which lies on the south-east of the town, we have at present nothing to do. I wish my reader to accompany Lord Mentmore and Stafford Carrington to the other end of the town, and to run their eyes over an equal expanse of gently undulating country, nearly

level indeed, and which constitutes the training and trial ground of this monument to English love of sport. The Heath exhibits at intervals, very few and far between, some stunted trees, or small ragged spinney, which may hold a rabbit or a tout. Up a part of the centre of the course runs a road defended by a hollow belt of half-grown wood; a shelter from the wind only to those who are pleased to watch the gallops from its cover. Below it again stretches a trial ground of considerable extent, towards the lower end of which, some straggling hedge-rows proclaim a recommencement of cultivated land. On the further side of this belt Lord Mentmore and his friend smoked their cigars.

The sun was dispelling the hanging vapours, and as they cleared away there appeared to rise on every side, as though by magic, far and near, hundreds of horses, each carefully clothed in divers colours, and ridden by his boy. In Indian file they crept slowly along, headed by the grave and mysterious trainer, on his sturdy cob, or

used-up thorough-bred one, champing at the single snaffle, or boring towards the ground with their arched necks, as their rider dropped his hands to their efforts, save when some unruly young one gave an occasional plunge, and was led back like a refractory schoolboy by the hand of his master to his proper place. Then, here and there were to be noticed men, like our heroes, who were come to see their strings out, and to test the capability of their cracks. It gave them, too, the opportunity of comparing notes, and of watching the movements of their neighbours. There was the great mill-owner, a millionnaire, one might say, sturdily plodding it, in thick highlows, and talking to his trainer of the merits of his last purchase, a yearling, from Mr. Blenkiron's lot. The stout and trusty Admiral bestrode a weight-carrier, dividing his attention pretty equally between them all, and drawing out his glasses every minute to take a closer inspection of a lot, as a doubt seemed to arise as to their identity. There was the mighty Israelite, the Jew financier of

London, Paris, and all the great cities of Europe and America, who shook thrones by his nod, at this moment trying to solve the question of a double event, and as anxious about its success as his father had once been about a foreign loan. Further on, a prematurely grey young *roué*, whose name and talents had sunk alike from their high and early estate to no doubtful insolvency, took his morning gallop in search of information; of whom it might be said, that if he lost his money dishonourably, he as dishonourably declined to pay. The next man watching the small but select few, in new clothing, and evidently intent upon being recognized, as an owner of a lot, open to criticism, is a successful stockjobber, who finds Newmarket Heath, and a point or two in the odds, the shortest road to social distinction. To complete the picture, you must imagine these persons multiplied to any extent, and the lazy, idle groups which infest the place, now busy in their calling, the touts paid and unpaid, private and public, the hangers-on of a small number of patrons, or the clients

of the low sporting press, now behind a tree, now seated in a hedge-row, now boldly inspecting some well-known favourite, whose trial was not yet to come, and the reader may have a fair and not unfavourable glimpse of Newmarket, as the sun rose upon it, on the morning in question.

'Do you see him coming, Stafford?' said Lord Mentmore to Carrington, who was looking towards the town through the belt of trees.

'Not yet; unless this is your string. I can't distinguish them from here, but there are two, four, six, eight. Oh! yes; they must be yours; and here comes Jackson himself.' And as he spoke the lot defiled at a distance, and then came slowly on, headed by Jackson, who was here, there, and everywhere, towards the lower trial-ground.

'What's this coming, Mentmore?' said Stafford, as three horses came streaming past at a fine pipe-opening gallop.

'They're the Marquis of Appleby's crack, and the two he bought of the duke. The crack's in

the middle. He goes well, doesn't he?' said Mentmore.

'Very; but he wants size for a Derby horse. He hasn't grown as they expected, they tell me.'

'He has grown up instead of down. Here come four of that ruffian Shoplifter's. The first of this lot has been pulled in every handicap for the last two seasons. She's good enough to win the Oaks; and now she's in the City and Suburban at 6st. 7lbs., so that she can't lose. His party have made her first favourite, and it's even betting she don't start at all.'

Here Jackson walked his horses slowly through the belt of trees, and touching his hat respectfully turned short round to the right, and after crossing the road directed them to walk along the bottom until he came down to them. He stopped behind and held a mysterious conversation of five minutes' length with Lord Mentmore. He then rejoined his charge.

On the very morning of which I am speaking, there passed along the back streets of

Newmarket a remarkably big, burly-looking man, dressed in a ragged velveteen shooting jacket, corduroy trousers, and a slouched cap with a peak to it, from beneath which a short crop of red hair might be seen; a grizzly beard fringed a very coarse, repulsive face. To be brief, it was our old acquaintance, Dan Morton. It seems difficult to conceive what he was doing in Newmarket. Yet he had a purpose, as was indeed plain from his stealthy manner, so unlike the bold bravado which he assumed in the village of Sommerton, when we were last in his company. As he crossed this street, or that, he looked uneasily up and down them; not precisely as knowing what he feared, but with that indefinite vague discretion of rascality, which betokens a cat on the look-out for cream somewhere or other. Finding no let or hindrance, in the way of police or acquaintance, he came at the back of the town towards the Heath, and pulled up deliberately enough behind Mr. Jackson's house, where a window looked towards the open country. Having taken up

his stand, in the early morning, near to this window, he was attracted by a light which shone in the room; and peering through the darkness and fog, he saw, by the light of a candle, the great Mr. Jackson, just commencing the elaborate shave for which he is famous.

'Bless my soul,' said Mr. Morton, to himself; 'well, I'm d—d; who'd 'a thought it?'

Having paid an attention, which we call 'delicate,' but which our neighbours, with much greater truth and wit, call 'presque violente,' to these signs, he reluctantly left the window, as though two minds agitated that body, and which was, indeed, big enough for both. He then walked, still in the fog, on to the Heath, and the first person he met was a very small man, so enveloped in clothes, neckcloth, and gaiters, as to look like a little baby wrapped up in its papa's clothes, playing at being grown-up.

'Hallo, young feller, who be you?' said the gruff voice of Dan Morton; 'and where be you a-goin' to in such a hurry?'

'What's that to you?' replied the precocious

young gentleman, in the very choicest Billingsgate. 'You're looking out for a mount, that's quite clear, by the look of you; and to judge by your countenance, one needn't ask where you're going to.' Saying which the small bundle of greatcoats and comforters resumed his walk, leaving Dan Morton not much wiser than when the conversation began.

The next person he met was more communicative. He was a thin, long, active-looking man, with a sealskin cap, and waistcoat, knee-breeches, and groom's gaiters, and a drab coat with outside pockets, in which his hands reposed, as safe from all labour. He was crossing the Heath diagonally, and nearly ran into Dan Morton in the fog.

'Young man, who lives in that house at the corner of the Heath, with the stabling at the back?'

'The biggest rogue in all England,' replied the man, without hesitation.

'I thought so,' said Dan; 'and what's his name?'

'They call him honest Tom Jackson.'

'And what's honest Tom Jackson a-doin' of here?' While this colloquy was progressing, Dan Morton was lighting his pipe.

'He's got Lord Mentmore's lot to look after, so it don't do to say much about him.'

'Great man is he?' asked Morton, in an off-hand sort of way.

'Greatest in these parts. Does as he likes with the 'osses.'

'Have a bit o' baccy?' said Dan, handing it out to the other, who quickly found his pipe. They smoked and walked in silence for a few minutes.

'Got anything very good?' was Dan's next inquiry.

'See any green?' was his companion's reply, who was now well into the middle of the 'baccy.'

'You'd better keep a civil tongue in your head, young feller,' said Dan, 'or I shall punch it for you.' And as he seemed exceedingly likely to do it, the conversation continued more politely across the Heath.

In the course of it, Morton learnt all he required to know about Jackson and his employer. In the latter he seemed to take some interest, probably from his temporary connection with Spring Vale and Sommerton. At present it was not easy to connect Dan Morton and Lord Mentmore in the interest of our story. Be that as it may, a couple of hours before the appearance of Lord Mentmore's horses he had shaken off his companion, and ensconced himself in a dry ditch, within easy range of the gallop, where he found shelter from the cold.

Mr. Jackson himself had been busy before starting, arranging the saddles, and weights, in which first the colt by Newminster, out of Lady Kingston, was to be tried at even weights with a three-year-old; and then the Archer was to take a spin at very high weights, to settle his Derby pretensions one way or the other. Honest Tom Jackson's measures were very simple: he took care to let the boys who rode, see and feel the saddles; and he took

care to put them on himself, with his own hands, having inserted about a stone more, unknown and unsuspected by anyone. The trial proved under these circumstances to be a failure; and the news of the old one having won easy, went to London with such suspicious celerity, that that afternoon Mr. Jackson was able to get considerable odds against his horse, Lord Mentmore having already backed him at even. Nor was his lordship allowed to know the real truth, for a very obvious reason. Lord Mentmore was much too straightforward, and his appearance in the ring would have left no doubt as to the capacity of his horse.

'Let them go down to the bottom, Jackson; bring them along slowly up to the turn, and let them race for the last quarter of a mile. Mr. Carrington will be the winning-post, and I will start with them at the run in.'

Away they came, the old horse leading at a moderate pace, their light clothing, without hoods, fluttering in the morning breeze. As they passed the corner, the young one was

allowed to go up, but still, only to the girths of the leader. The boy sat still, and the Newminster colt was pulling. He was a fine slashing goer, and looked like winning all over. Then as they neared Lord Mentmore, the pace increased, until they reached him, when dropping into his saddle he went racing by their side, and watching his young one with an anxious look. Disappointment succeeded to hope, as he saw him die away in his final effort; and knew that if that was the criterion, his money was gone.

'That's not good enough to win, Jackson?'

'It's not good enough to back, my lord; but you must have a run for the money. "Many a slip between the cup and the lip." Besides, we may improve that form before the day,'

With the Two-Thousand Guinea horse, a different game was pursued; and as Mr. Jackson had opened a commission to lay against him, the horse was to be made at the shortest possible odds. When his trial came, the ad-

ditional weight was put upon the other back; and as the colt ran at least a seven-pound better horse than he really was, his master backed him with sufficient confidence to bring him to the short odds at which his trainer desired him to be. The trials over, and the rest of the business satisfactorily concluded, the two friends returned to their breakfast, and Mr. Jackson himself took care of the saddles.

After a few days spent in Newmarket, Stafford proposed a return to their hunting quarters. A proposal to which Lord Mentmore responded, as lovers alone respond to an approximation to their mistress.

Mr. Jackson had relieved his mind of its cares, his body of its coat, and his feet of their boots. Dressing-gown and slippers had replaced the latter, and a bright fire, a good cigar, and a strong and hot glass of whisky-toddy, promoted circulation. He was thinking, as men will think, of his successes, his gains, and calculating in how many years he might be keeping his own race-horses, with another to

train for him? No, no, none of that. He knows the value of personal superintendence himself too well. No secret so close as that between a man and his horse. Certainly his present condition offered a brilliant contrast to a time on which he was meditating. Mr. Jackson was eminently consistent too, for whether he lost or won, it was always without reference to the capability of his horses, or to the convenience of his master; it was entirely for the benefit of himself. Just now he was running over in his mind's-eye, a series of domestic pictures, cartoons of the life and adventures of honest Tom Jackson. He was a boy, a dirty snivelling little boy, with a pinafore and a slate, shirking his lessons, and stealing his schoolfellows' marbles and toffy. Then he was grooming horses, and riding them at exercise and in their gallops, where he was kept at work only by an ash-plant, unhesitatingly made use of: it was a fortunate circumstance for the racing world that he soon outfed his weight, or that nature had embellished

his person with early corpulence, for his natural talent for roping, lying, welshing, and general rascality was such as would have mystified even a Greek patriot, and have ruined a score of stables. He had powerful friends in the trade, and was only found out once; and it is somewhat remarkable that though his friends were always willing to recommend him, they none of them employed him. They found him more useful in their neighbours' stables than in their own. Then the foreground of the picture darkened considerably. There was a Quarter-Sessions judge, and a jury, and a young man at the prisoner's bar, and an acquittal; and then a change of country and some very rough life, which finished at the diggings; and some very rough customers indeed, among whom was one Dan Morton. To which succeeded a very wholesome picture full of good luck, and external respectability, and a Lethean forgetfulness of all that had been wrong a quarter of a century before; and such wholesale robberies, but so safe and so profitable, that they set conjecture

almost at defiance, and swallowed up all previous felonies in their Tartarean blackness.

Mr. Jackson had arrived at this point, when he was roused by a short, but distinct and decisive knock at his kitchen door. It was opened by one of the boys, who remained after stable hours to assist in the embellishment of Tom Jackson's person, by cleaning his boots and brushing his clothes.

'Who's there, William,' inquired he as the boy presented himself

'Won't give no name; says he must see you, sir.'

'Really. Shut the door. What does he look like?' asked Jackson.

'German giant, as we see at Ascot last year; a'most as big, and quite as dirty.'

'He must be a nice sort of individual. Show him in, William. Got some information pr'aps.

'Don't look it, anyhow,' rejoined the boy; but he went out and returned, bringing after him Dan Morton. Both were speechless until

the boy had left the room, when Jackson rose and went to the door.

'William,' said he.

'Yes, sir,' said the boy, who was not out of hearing.

'Take the saddle and the leading rein we borrowed of the duke's people down to Mr. Miller's, and say I'm very much obliged to him. I'll attend to the house till Mrs. White comes in.' And Jackson returned to the room, after seeing that his orders were likely to be executed.

In the meantime Morton proceeded to the adjustment of his proper person with those *petits soins* which indicate some intimacy. He pulled out his pipe, and proceeded to smoke, drew a chair to the fire, and arranged himself in it, as is the manner of squatters, with his arms and elbows over the back of it; taking then a retrospective view of the blazing logs. They were pleasant enough to look at.

'And now, Morton,' said the other, as he entered, 'what is it? What brings you here?

I heard you were well employed in ——shire, and that General H——'s covers had seen the last of you.'

'Oh! you heard of me then; but you didn't think it worth while to inquire after an old friend? I've been back long enough.'

'The new country and this are different. Tell me what you want, and if I can do it for you, I will.' And Jackson continued standing, in order to shorten the interview as much as possible.

'Bread, meat, clothes, money,—everything; and I don't think you're the man to turn your back upon Dan Morton.'

'How did you find me out?'

'Easily enough; my employments are various since I came to England. Some gents as do a little in the ring sent me down here to look arter a pal, as isn't on the square. I been arter him on their account; I come arter you on my own.'

'I'll be honest with you, Dan Morton,' said Mr. Jackson, putting his thumbs through the

armholes of his waistcoat, after having ascertained that his cigar had gone out in his excitement.

'Thank you for nothing,' returned the other.

'I'll be honest with you, Dan Morton. Since I've been home, I'm in a different position to what I was when you found me at the Creek.'

'Are ye honester? 'Cos, if you are, you're not much use to me, nor to yourself either.'

'May be, or not; but it don't suit me to have you seen about my premises; if you want a trifle to help you,' said Tom, magnanimously drawing out his purse, 'I won't say no to an old comrade; but we must make an end of it here.'

And here Jackson put on his hat, which was singularly well brushed, and stood on the table before him; it is less imposing with a dressing-gown than any other style of coat.

'I should a' thought that you might have found a good reason. However, you know your own business best,' said the other sulkily, and knocking the ashes out of his pipe. 'Now

you're the great man, I suppose. Once on a time there wasn't such a difference between us.'

'Perhaps not; and if you're hungry, you shall eat; and, if you're thirsty, you shall drink; but Newmarket's no place for you, Dan Morton. So take that sovereign, and be off.'

'A sovereign!' said Morton, looking contemptuously at the money, 'I rather think my information's worth more than that to you;' at the same time, however, slipping it into his waistcoat pocket after spinning it.

'I'm quite sure you can't have any information that I care for, so you may keep it as far as I'm concerned.'

'P'raps it u'll pay better to give it to somebody else.'

And with these words and a defiant air Dan Morton replaced his cap upon his head, and lounged towards the door, which was opened for him by Tom Jackson, and scrupulously closed on his back.

'He seems pretty well to do,' was the reflec-

tion of the one; and 'I don't think he'll risk it for a hundred pounds or two.'

'There's very little to get by paying off such a scoundrel as that; and I think I can stand my ground against Dan Morton. There are richer men to pay for that business before it comes to my turn, and Master Morton's not the man to put his own head in a noose for the sake of a hundred more or less—we'll wait a bit.'

He resumed his cigar after this, but it was not so narcotic in its influence as before the visit.

'You never race, Carrington? Has it ever occurred to you to keep a horse or two?'

They were alone in the train a day or two after, on their way back to Spring Vale Manor.

'Never.'

'Curious; so fond of sport, and so good a judge; and a family taste.'

'I can understand my father, and my great-uncle. They lived in other days. They lost money, but they lost it to gentlemen. I've

none to lose, and I should grudge it sadly to those ruffians.'

'I've had a bad time of it lately.'

'Can you be surprised at it? Every man's hand is against you. It's unfair; it's outrageous. Give it up.'

'Could I only give the ring one good turn! I think I've a chance now with the Two Thousand and the Derby.'

'*A quoi bon?* Your book is heavy enough for anything; but if you win how can you get paid? And is it worth the trouble and associations?'

'Probably not; but what to do now is the question.'

'Do you ask me? Bring them to the hammer. Keep half-a-dozen for the credit of the turf, if you like; never go near the ring; run only for the stakes; and get rid of Tom Jackson.'

'Jackson?' said Lord Mentmore, with some surprise.

'Is as great a rascal as I ever saw, if I am

any judge of physiognomy. I'll tell you something more. When you went over to the rooms the night before last, I took my cigar to the end of the street, as the evening was warm and fine, and your room rather hot. Turning at Jackson's premises, I saw clearly enough a man coming from them whom I know. He's a Sommerton man. Whether he was with your trainer, or with some of your subordinates, and for what I can't tell; but there's no good doing where Dan Morton of Sommerton is to be found.'

Soon after, the train stopped.

CHAPTER XI.

A WALK IN THE COUNTRY—SOMMERTON.

'Son bonheur même a l'air d'une calamité,
Tout dans ce pays, tout est odieux pour moi :
Tout, jusqu'à ses beautés, m'inspire de l'effroi.'

THE absence of Stafford Carrington and Lord Mentmore may be presumed to have made Spring Vale Manor dull. At all events Evelyn Carrington was more at her aunt's than usual, and assisted at the preternaturally long walks of the old lady with increased activity. I have hardly had an opportunity of describing Philadelphia Carrington at home. I will endeavour to do so before she enters into a conversation with her grand-niece, which is explanatory of the position of parties at this time of my tale.

Aunt Philly at home was perfection ; and

remarkably eccentric as she undoubtedly was in many things, vigorous in action and language, she surrounded herself with every external attribute of a finished lady. Her rooms were small but light, and charmingly furnished. When you saw her at her eight-o'clock breakfast, her dress was as perfect as if she had expected a visit from the bench of bishops—a body which she respected as much as their profound learning, single-mindedness, and disinterestedness have always merited. At six in the morning, the little old woman had a cold bath of spring-water every day of her life. It seemed to freshen and invigorate her intellect, as it evidently did the members of her body. She carried its freshness with her all day long. Her table was served with the most dazzling linen, the finest porcelain and glass, for which she had a mania, and rolls, butter, cream, and cookery which was rivalled seldom and never excelled. Her one man-servant was of the same pattern—aged, but neat and handy; and how many linen jackets

Nurse put on during the week, it would be difficult to say. He was so respectful and respectable himself, that it was impossible not to put a Mister before his name. In the matter of linen your low-church parson had no chance at all with this servitor *d'un meilleur âge*. She had begun life as somewhat of a man-hater, but Mr. Nurse had almost reconciled her to the uglier sex.

Amongst other peculiarities Aunt Philly prided herself upon never being without what was wanted or its equivalent; in other words, upon her readiness for every emergency, and upon her endurance. This latter quality she exhibited in walks of unheard-of distances, at a pace which would have put the patience of Job to the test. Having made up her mind to walk four miles to breakfast, whether it occupied two hours or four, she never stopped short of her intention; and though the carriage at the Manor was always at her service, she seldom availed herself of it. This independence of character had been her strong point through

life; and if it had made her some enemies, it had gained her numberless admirers. There was not a soul in the county who knew Miss Carrington that did not honour her. Her charities were as numerous as they were judicious; and when she imagined herself imposed upon, she had quite courage enough to resist.

She was bent on one of these excursions when Evelyn Carrington presented herself in all the freshness of a morning toilette, a charming hat, and Balmoral boots. She exhibited a striped petticoat of a warm colour, as is the correct thing to do.

'My dear child,' said the old lady, passively submitting to a salute, 'you're early?'

'Rather, aunt; the hunting gets us out of bed in good time; and now they're away, papa and mamma are seldom down before half-past nine—it's only just half-past eight.'

'Then you've had no breakfast?' rejoined the old lady, dropping her glasses, and putting down the county paper.

'And you have already finished?'

'That's nothing; we'll have in Nurse, and see what he's got for us. Now, Nurse, make some good tea for your young mistress, and put the *pâté* on table again—in fact we want another breakfast;' and Nurse disappeared. 'You know, my dear, I always call you the young mistress, because you'll have all I've got when it pleases God to take me.'

'Oh, aunt, don't—'

'We shall all go to heaven some day or other, that's certain; so it's no use to make a mystery of the matter.'

I think the old lady concurred in the late Chancellor's verdict, who 'deprived the orthodox of the pleasures of everlasting damnation' by a legal decision.

'You came here to tell me something, my dear?'

'No, aunt, indeed I did not.' Evelyn coloured slightly.

'I am sorry to see that it was to tell me a falsehood, my child.'

'Oh, aunt dear, how—?'

'Well, never mind, finish your breakfast. I am going to walk to a cottage beyond Sommerton, and we shall have plenty of time to talk.'

'And how do you intend to get over the stiles,' said Evelyn, laughing.

'Never you mind that, either. I shall do without Stafford; and as to Walter, he's better helping the old women in his parish than out of it.'

Ellen Bradfield, the squire's daughter, was just as charitably disposed on this very morning as Miss Carrington herself; but she set out at half-past ten on the same mission as the other at half-past nine. Strange to say they were both bent on the same errand to the same house—to look after a poor fellow who had hurt himself by a fall from a scaffold in Mr. Bradfield's employment. He had formerly been a workman on the Spring Vale Estate—hence a natural wish on the part of Miss Carrington to offer him some assistance; and the old lady was well disposed to add her own

personal inquiries to the dole. Giles might have felt flattered had he known that Mr. Scarsdale was equally solicitous for his recovery; and that the squire himself had given orders that it should be accelerated by all possible means.

'As soon as ever he can be moved, let him be moved,' said Mr. Bradfield.

'The doctor says that he can't be moved without great danger, sir,' replied Mr. Jennyngs, the bailiff.

'I don't want to kill him outright, but I want his cottage,' said the other; and with that Mr. Jennnygs departed.

At eighty years of age the wind is never so good as it has been, be the condition what it may; and though the stiles offered some hindrance to progress, they aided respiration and conversation as resting-places.

'I dare say you find the house lonely, my dear,' said the old lady, sitting down on the first stile she came to, 'now that Lord Mentmore is gone.'

'On the contrary, aunt, it's a relief.'

'Then you don't like him, Miss Evelyn?'

'Indeed, I do; I do not know anyone I like better.'

'Then you think you like him too much. Evelyn, I admire you.'

'And why? Aunt Philly,' said she with an open brow, full of smiles, and evidently tickled with this unsuspected declaration of love.

'Because, my dear, if you know your weakness, and are not ashamed of telling it to your best friend, you'll soon conquer it.'

She shook her head.

'That's not it? Then what's the matter? Has Lord Mentmore made you an offer?' again demanded the old lady.

'No, aunt, certainly not'

'Should you accept him, if he did?'

'No, aunt: I really — but you know he hasn't asked me —, well, well if he did, I think not,' and Evelyn blushed and laughed.

'Then, my dear, you'd be a greater fool than any of the young—; here John Briggs, John

Briggs,' shouted the old lady, shaking her crutched stick at a man who was crossing the field, 'come and help my niece to push me over this stile into the next field.'

As the labourers in the neighbourhood were accustomed to this mode of progression, it scarcely raised the ghost of a smile on the stolid face of John Briggs, who felt both the 'esse' and 'posse' of many a shilling. In the next field there was a broad footpath, and at the end of it neither stile nor labourer; farther on there was stile and no labourer, and sometimes a labourer and no stile; but the morning was getting on, and Evelyn Carrington had made her aunt understand how matters stood between her and Lord Mentmore. To a delicate mind, such as Evelyn's, it is not easy to vaunt an attachment such as Mentmore's, unless it be reciprocal. The admission, still more the avowal, appears to place the narrator upon a pedestal so far above most of her fellows.

'Now, my dear, I must rest here; and then you shall help me over this stile; for I don't

see my old friend Will Hodge at work here to-day. There are only three more before we get to Sommerton.' Both the ladies were well wrapped up, and though near Christmas the weather was open and genial, or the walk would have been a cold one.

'And where are we going to, aunt?'

'We're going to see old Giles. They tell me that that very excellent landlord, Mr. Abel Bradfield, has threatened him with condign punishment for daring to injure himself, whilst engaged in his service. Having broken his ribs, he's going to turn him out of his cottage; you know you and I keep favourite bits of china in our service, when they are broken. I think he's a very bad man, my dear.'

'They speak well of Mrs. Bradfield, aunt, and of Miss Bradfield.'

'Yes, so I've heard; but I doubt they're none of 'em good for much; I see by the paper this morning his son's likely to be returned for some borough in the North, without opposition.'

'We have never known much of the Bradfields; it seems odd to live so near, and never to have even exchanged a visit.'

'The lion would be as likely to lie down with the lamb,' said the old lady, 'though there's more of the wolf than the lamb in him. Ah! here comes my old friend Davy Lightfoot to help us over this terrible obstacle. That's it, Davy, my man, not too fast,' and Aunt Philly placed her hand on the stalwart smock-frocked arm of Davy, and surmounted the difficulty. Evelyn disdained the assistance of a rough, but honest hand. Towards the end of their walk they met Job Fletcher, who was also an acquaintance of Miss Carrington, and who addressed a few words to him, chiefly as to the health of his wife and his children.

'Nanny's pretty hearty, mum, thank 'e, and the children, mum,' and Job Fletcher opened the gate into the village for the two ladies. 'Thank 'e, mum,' again said Job as he touched his hat, this time for a piece of silver which he conveyed to his pocket.

'And how's Giles to-day, Job; I suppose you've been to see him?'

'The missus have been up and says he's a trifle better; but he's a bit put out about havin' to go to the union. Says he ain't used to it like.'

'Well! few honest men are; but what's he going to the union for?'

'Squire wants un's cottage; goin' to make it one o' the park gates for the keepers,' and Job touched his hat again and was gone.

'Look at this,' and the old lady stood on a rising ground and surveyed the now ugly but compactly-built village, and the surrounding fields, and said, 'there's a property, my dear. It was once yours; and now it's his, and worth five times the money with his iron, and coal, and tramways, and furnaces, and all the means of doing good, and he's made it a hell upon earth by his evil passions.'

'You ought to know this man well, aunt; surely his family are not all like him. I knew the young man a little, and he seems a—a—a—clever—'

'Clever enough, I'll be bound to say—the Bradfields never wanted brains; only honesty. But you shall hear all about it—it's a long story—as we go back. At present, that's the cottage and the sooner we're there the better.'

'I hope you're not tired, my dear aunt.'

'Tired, ma'am, not in the least,' retorted the old lady, rather testily, though she was almost fainting. As they knocked at Giles's door, it opened, and Ellen Bradfield met them face to face.

Two of those three persons were remarkable for presence of mind. Miss Carrington never flinched from man, woman, or child in her life; so with a very shrewd guess as to who the lady was, though she had not seen her since childhood, the old lady darted a sharp look at her from her black sloe-like eyes, and then made her a silent bow. Miss Bradfield returned it with interest, and then seeing Evelyn, whom she knew and recognized at once, she exchanged a more cordial greeting, assuring her in answer to her inquiry, that no further harm had re-

sulted from her drive, than the sacrifice of one of the two ponies to her father's fears or prejudices. She then presented Ellen Bradfield formally to her aunt, who said, briefly,

'We scarcely calculated, ma'am, on finding one of your family here.'

'I hardly know anyone so likely to have been found here, except Mr. Scarsdale.'

Miss Bradfield could not but understand the tone of the old woman; and Evelyn, perceiving it, ventured to begin an interpository,

'Aunt;' but aunt was not to be pacified in the presence of the enemy.

'Very little could be said by one of my name to Miss Bradfield, that could need explanation;' and Aunt Philly passed into the cottage, while the plume of her steeple-crowned beaver hat, which she insisted on wearing, nodded with indignation. Evelyn stayed behind a moment, to say something apologetic if possible; but there seemed very little to be said. Ellen Bradfield looked at the good, truthful, pretty face of the young aristocrat, and only smiled. She

said a few words on the length of the walk from Spring Vale, and assured Evelyn that she would find her patient better in every respect. The girls shook hands for the first time in their lives, and parted. 'How like her brother!' thought Evelyn; what Miss Bradfield thought we don't know.

It was not so strange that the junior members of these two families did not feel that antipathy which it was manifestly their duty to have felt. Their minds probably were, at birth, as capable as others, of receiving impressions from external objects; but it was clear that they were not so susceptible of envy, hatred, and malice, as they ought to have been. No one pretends to account for this. It was clearly their duty to have been natural enemies, to have imbibed evil prejudices, to have drunk in bitterness and gall with their mother's milk, and to have felt a sentiment of unaccountable repulsion, as strong as that of the Federals and Confederates, the Capulets and Montagues, Politics and Honesty, Schoolboys and Soap-

and-water, or any other two things between which there is a natural and unconquerable aversion. But there was very little of this really. Sir Michael, it has been seen, said not a word about his own affront, or we do not know what might have been his daughter's indignation. Abel Bradfield had been equally silent on the subject of his rebuff; and though it rankled deeply in his heart, he had given vent to no determinate invectives, beyond the ordinary expletives, in which he indulged. Pride had kept them both quiet on that point. At Spring Vale the Bradfields were almost ignored; a quiet contempt for the whole mass rather pervaded the elders of the family. So that of personal abuse, or reasons for personal affront, the junior members, as children, heard nothing. At Sommerton, the invective was personal enough, violent enough, and frequent enough; but it probably defeated its own object. It was regarded as the exaggerated outpouring of an embittered spirit, and produced but little effect upon his hearers. Whom

did not Abel Bradfield envy? Whom would he not have cursed? So between the two these young people were not such good haters as good children should have been.

It is impossible to say what Evelyn might have felt had she heard of the impertinence of Mr. Bradfield's proposal; or how far Laurence Bradfield would have acquiesced in his father's unauthorized transmission of himself to the enemy.

The visit to the cottage proved so far satisfactory, that it was clear that Giles himself was better, and that Mrs. Giles had been made happy by the certainty of retaining her cottage for the present. Immediate prospect of the union was taken away. 'Mr. Jennyngs told you that you would have to go, did he, Mrs. Giles; then if he comes here again with any message or information about the cottage, desire him to come to me; and on no account quit your house, whoever tells you. My father must do without a lodge gate, and Mr. McShotten can stay where he is till your husband is at work

again.' Mrs. Giles was loud in her praise of the young missus, and the New Parliament man, as she called her young master, and hoped the latter might 'do well in his new situation, God bless him.' It was impossible to hear these praises without being convinced of their sincerity; and the prejudices of Miss Carrington, and of Evelyn too, perhaps, began to give way before the satisfaction of seeing that those, who could not chain Cerberus, sopped him; and that Abel Bradfield's greatest enemies were those of his own household. The old lady had a little temper of her own, and if she desired to gratify it she might have done so with a very solid reflection; that domestic opposition is continuous, and leaves no time for reparation of damages. No war like a civil war for intensity.

As Aunt Philly turned from the cottage door, after her visit of charity, she walked some way, leaning heavily on her stick on the one side, and making use of Evelyn's arm on the other. Conversation never flagged long with her; and

by the time she reached the village again, and had crossed the road to enter the fields on her way home, she found it convenient to stop and look round her. No one who had once known Sommerton, and now looked at it, wanted a topic of conversation. The change was remarkable enough.

'Our friend seems exclusive,' said Aunt Philly, eyeing the stone cottages and the park wall with about as much satisfaction as a burglar looks at Newgate. 'No wonder the last curate, who was too modest to knock at the doors and ask, spent his first morning in looking for the church, and returned to Saxonby without having found it.'

'Was that Mr. Scarsdale, Lord Mentmore's friend, aunt?'

'I believe it was, my dear. A pains-taking young man,' added the old lady, with a certain amount of patronage. She made a point of becoming acquainted with the neighbouring clergy, by name and character, at all events. Evelyn said nothing, but thought it was

not the praise that Mr. Scarsdale would have desired.

'I should scarcely suppose Silvermere a larger place than this.'

'I've no idea of the size of it, aunt. I hear the gardens are the finest in England, and the situation must be far more beautiful.'

'A fine place to be mistress of, Evelyn.'

'That would depend upon who was the master, aunt.'

'My dear, the mistress may always be the master; and you certainly ought to marry.'

'Why so?'

'Mild, good young women, who are dependent upon others, and of a gentle nature, are meant for marriage. You'll never take care of yourself. It wouldn't have agreed with me, my dear; and I think that Miss Bradfield looks as if she could do without it.'

'That's jumping to a conclusion very rashly, I think. I dare say we might both manage to put up with it, if we could have the husband we liked.'

'All life is habit, so that that has less to do with the business than appears at first sight. But my breath is better, and if you'll give me your arm we'll proceed, my dear, and then I'll tell you something about the Bradfields.'

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